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Cover pictures © Mark Hamblin (RSPB Images.com) / Ann & Steve Toon

## In this issue

### 12 Birds of summer

Oscar Dewhurst shows you how to hone your bird photography skills

### 20 Photo Roadshow The home of photography

Justin Minns discovers Lacock Abbey, once home to Henry Fox Talbot

### 24 Defying the odds

Samo Vidic talks about photographing high-achieving disabled athletes

### 28 Wild things

Five pros offer their expert advice on creating your best wildlife shots yet

### 34 Celebrating today's engineers

Modern engineering is diverse, as the IET photo contest aims to show

### 38 Look sharp

Andrew Fusek Peters on how to use a simple yet effective workflow for editing wildlife shots

### 42 30 wildlife accessories

Accessories that could make all the difference to your wildlife photography

### 48 Taking flight

Michael Topham tests Nikon's AF-S Nikkor 180-400mm f/4E TC1.4 FL ED lens

### 57 Win a pop-up wildlife hide!

Competition: Your chance to win one of four great pop-up hides

## Regulars

### 3 7 days

### 18 Inbox

### 36 Photo Insight

### 53 Tech Talk

### 66 Final Analysis

# 7 days

## A week in photography



Summertime, and the photography is easy. Well, maybe not easy, but there's lots of inspiration around. Our big feature focuses on summer birds – a perennially popular subject all year, but the warmer temperatures and longer days make life a lot easier for bird photographers. Turn to page 12 for advice on how to get great shots of birds and the best spots to find them.

Some of the biggest wildlife photographers share their insights, including Ben Hall and Laurie Campbell. There's also practical buying advice on the best wildlife gear, and a guide to editing your wildlife images. It's essential reading if you want to avoid common pitfalls like oversharpening or clumsy cropping. We hope this issue will help you get some of your best-ever bird and wildlife shots.

**Nigel Atherton, Editor**

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## ONLINE PICTURE OF THE WEEK

© PAUL CRUDGINGTON



IMAGE: PAUL CRUDGINGTON FOR PROMOTION PURPOSES ONLY AND ON SCREEN ONLY

## EYE Film Institute

by Paul Crudgington

Fujifilm X-T2, 18-55mm, 1/500sec at f/16, ISO 400

This high-contrast street scene was uploaded to our Twitter page using the hashtag #appicoftheweek. It was taken by photographer Paul Crudginton. He tells us, 'I took this image on the steps of the Eye Film Institute in Amsterdam. I found this spot where the architecture, natural light and shadows all came together

to create the composition you see here; I then waited for the right person to enter. Post-processing consisted of basic adjustments for exposure, contrast, clarity, spot removal, some additional darkening of the shadows and a small crop tweak, but it doesn't differ greatly from the in-camera raw file.'

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## Send us your pictures

If you'd like to see your work published in *Amateur Photographer*, here's how to send us your images:

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**CD/DVD** Send us a disc of high-resolution JPEG, TIFF or PSD images (at least 2480 pixels along its longest length), with a contact sheet, to the address on page 55.

**Via our online communities** Post your pictures into our Flickr group, Facebook page, Twitter feed, or the gallery on our website. See details above.

**Transparencies/prints** Well-packed prints or slides (without glass mounts) should be sent by Special Delivery, with a return SAE, to the address on page 55.

## NEWS ROUND-UP

The week in brief, edited by Amy Davies and Hollie Latham Hucke



### Olympus launches 'denim' E-PL9

A special blue edition of the recently launched PEN E-PL9 camera has been announced. Joining the existing white, black and brown models launched in March, the blue colour is designed to emulate the look of denim material. The E-PL9 blue with M.Zuiko Digital 14-42mm f/3.5-5.6 EZ pancake lens is available for £649.99 (RRP).

### Camera+ app gets major refresh

One of the most popular third-party camera apps for iOS (iPhone and iPad) has a new version after eight years on the market. The new Camera+ 2 app features a redesigned interface to include manual controls, raw capture and depth editing. All its features are available from the get-go, with no need for extra purchases.



### Yongnuo introduces 50mm f/1.4 lens

Budget third-party lens manufacturer Yongnuo has announced a new standard 50mm f/1.4 prime lens. Its features include 'beautiful bokeh', a USB port for upgrading the lens firmware, support for live-view focusing, multilayer coating technology, a 7-blade aperture and gold-plated contacts. Pricing is likely to be sub-£200, available first in a Canon mount.

### Tamron admits autofocus issue

Tamron has announced that it has discovered some issues with the autofocus of its 28-75mm f/2.8 Di III RXD lens for Sony full-frame models, released on 24 May. The company says that it is evaluating the cause of the error, along with an appropriate solution. A firmware update is expected shortly.



### New 28mm mirrorless lens now on Kickstarter

A new Kamlan 28mm f/1.4 optic has been launched. The lens offers an effective focal length of 42mm on APS-C cameras (Fujifilm X, Sony E and Canon EOS M), or 56mm on Micro Four Thirds cameras. A pledge of at least \$149 is required to secure a lens, with an expected delivery in August.



# BIG picture

Powerful image of rescued rhino featured in campaigning book

Blindfolded and sedated, a young white rhino waits in a boma (enclosed area used to protect wildlife) after a long journey from South Africa. It will be kept in the boma and reunited with its mother before being released in Botswana's Okavango Delta as part of efforts to rebuild Botswana's lost rhino



populations. The picture was taken by conservation photographer Neil Aldridge and appears in the new book *Photographers Against Wildlife Crime*, which also features hard-hitting imagery by Brent Stirton, Brian Skerry, Britta Jaschinski and Chris Packham, among others. The project aims to help bring an end to the illegal wildlife trade and to celebrate those who protect wildlife. Visit [www.photographersagainstwildlifecrime.com](http://www.photographersagainstwildlifecrime.com)

## Words & numbers

*Photograph: a picture painted by the sun without instruction in art*  
Ambrose Bierce

American journalist (1842-1914)

2

Number of years a Leica Summicron-M 35mm f/2 ASPH lens was lost in the desert before being reunited with its owner, still in perfect condition



Focusing speed and accuracy are improved in the new 70-200mm f/4L lens

# Canon launches 70-200mm lens duo

**TWO UPGRADES** to Canon's 70-200mm zoom lenses have been announced, with a new 70-200mm f/2.8L and a 70-200mm f/4L shortly available to buy.

The EF 70-200mm f/2.8L IS III USM replaces Canon's flagship 70-200mm lens, and has been designed with high-performance and extra robustness in mind. It has protective seals, which make it resistant to moisture and dust, while fluorine-coated front and rear elements are easy to clean.

It has a wide maximum constant aperture of f/2.8, and features an eight-bladed circular diaphragm, with fluorite and UD optics for high contrast and excellent resolution. In addition, camera shake is compensated for with a 3.5-stop Image Stabiliser. A ring-type USM motor offers silent and quick autofocus, while a focusing ring is also included for manual adjustment.

The EF 70-200mm f/2.8L IS USM will set you back by £2,149.99 when it goes on sale in the summer.

Meanwhile, the new EF 70-200mm f/4L zoom lens

is a more affordable alternative, and will cost around £1,299.99 when it also becomes available in the summer.

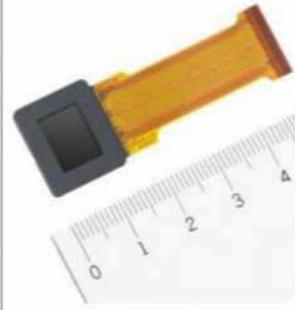
Weighing in at just 780g, the f/4 version of the lens is also a good option for travelling a little lighter. It features fluorine coatings to prevent water and dirt from clinging to the lens, while Super Spectra coatings are designed to eliminate ghosting and flare.

The lens uses a nine-blade aperture, while there's a new Image Stabiliser unit, which is based on the design of Canon's EF 100-400mm f/4.5-5.6L IS II USM lens and delivers the equivalent effect of a shutter five-stops faster, compared to the previous lens's three stops.

Also improved is the speed and accuracy of focusing, thanks to a combination of a Ring USM and a new third-generation EF engine, which features a new high-performance control CPU and newly developed firmware. Silent autofocus can also be tweaked manually, and it has a close focusing distance of 1 metre – compared to 1.2 metres of its predecessor.



Canon's new flagship EF 70-200mm f/2.8L IS III USM zoom lens



## High-res Sony viewfinder revealed

A NEW 0.5in type high-resolution OLED Microdisplay (electronic viewfinder) has been announced by Sony. The UXGA (1600 x 1200) resolution display gives an equivalent of 5.76m dots of resolution, and features the world's smallest pixel pitch of 6.3 microns, says Sony.

Despite the high resolution (a resolution of 1.6x the previous model), Sony says that the finder consumes the same amount of power as previous devices.

There's no word yet on which camera the viewfinder might be used in, but it's thought that an Alpha 7S III could be on the cards within the next few months.



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DxO has optimised all the Nik Collection plug-ins

## Nik Collection 2018 and DxO PhotoLab 1.2

**THE IMMEDIATE** availability of Nik Collection 2018 – a set of plug-ins for Adobe Lightroom and Photoshop – has been announced.

Acquired by DxO from Google last year, this 'by DxO' update marks the Nik Collection's return to the market with the first stable version and with customer support. Also announced at the same time is DxO PhotoLab 1.2, an update of DxO's acclaimed raw and JPEG image-processing software.

DxO says it has spent several months analysing and optimising the code of the seven plug-ins that

make up the Nik Collection. The update makes it fully compatible with the latest versions of Adobe products, as well as the latest Apple OS updates.

The plug-ins comprise the following: Analog Efex Pro, Color Efex Pro, Dfine, HDR Efex Pro, Sharpener Pro, Silver Efex Pro and Viveza. Until 1 July, you can pay just £39.99 for the software, and a free 30-day trial is also available.

DxO PhotoLab 1.2 integrates Nik Software's U Point technology, allowing photographers to apply local settings in a

non-destructive fashion to specific areas in an image.

Other additions include Hue (HSL) and Selective Tone settings, which unblocks locally dark areas, and also recovers overexposed areas. The tool's equalizer system has been redesigned accordingly, with local settings now being grouped by categories: Light, Color and Detail.

Support for a number of new camera models, including the Sony A7 III and Panasonic Lumix G9, has also been added. You can download DxO PhotoLab 1.2 from the DxO website for £99.

## Canon stops producing film cameras

**THE LAST** Canon film camera still in production, the EOS-1V, has been officially discontinued. This means that after producing film cameras for 82 years, Canon will now be digital only.

Canon has pledged to offer support and repairs for the model until October 2025, but says that beyond 2020, the availability of parts may make some repairs difficult or even impossible.



End of an era – the Canon EOS-1V model

Second-hand Canon film cameras are still available in abundance.

The news came in the same week that Leica announced it would be discontinuing its M7 analogue camera – the last numbered M series camera before the M8 adopted digital technologies. Leica will still be making other film models, including the MP and the M-A.

For the latest news visit [www.amateurphotographer.co.uk](http://www.amateurphotographer.co.uk)

## Back in the day

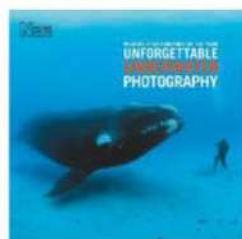
A wander through the AP archive. This week we pay a visit to June 1999



JUNE 1999 and revolution is in the air – the digital one, that is. Film was still very much dominant, but AP featured a very prescient article on digital by Joel Lacey. The technology has moved on massively since Joel's piece, but his concluding sentence is still relevant some 20 years later. 'Pixels are but a tiny part of the equation.... as with all photographs, it's the quality of the final image that counts, not how many pixels or grains went into making it.' This issue also ran some great features on architectural photography and rock images, two very different genres, while the APOY competition was as popular then as it is now. The 'Basic Instinct' cover is fun too, with some cunning wordplay, and a 'did you see what they did there' merging of a Vivitar v4000 and a Cosina C3.



AP was starting to see the writing on the wall for film



# Bookshelf

# Unforgettable Underwater Photography

Edited by Rosamund Kidman Cox

In this volume, Wildlife Photographer of the Year presents some of the most breathtaking underwater images from its 50-year run, says **Oliver Atwell**

*Wildlife Photographer of the Year: Unforgettable Underwater Photography* is published by the Natural History Museum and priced at £20. ISBN 978-0565094560

**E**ven for people not necessarily enamoured with wildlife photography (or even animals generally), the annual Wildlife Photographer of the Year (WPOTY) competition is difficult to ignore. With such a diverse and global reach, there is something for everyone, whether it's in the subjects, the incredible technical proficiency or the message the photographer is looking to communicate.

Last year's winner was Brent Stirton, whose image 'Memorial to a Species'

showed in unflinching detail a slain rhino and was taken as part of an undercover investigation into the illegal trade in rhino horn. It stands as perhaps the most hard-hitting, emotional and important winner of the WPOTY competition in recent years and is a good demonstration of why photo competitions like WPOTY are so vital (Brent was also awarded AP's Power of Photography Award this year).

However, with such a powerful image it can mean that the ones beneath get a little lost. Year after year, one of the most interesting categories is Under Water, which in 2018 was won by Anthony Berberian with his image 'Jellyfish Jockey' which saw a 1.2cm phyllosoma, or lobster larva, feasting on a small dead jellyfish.

In this book, published by the Natural History Museum – who sponsor and host the WPOTY competition exhibition every year – many of the greatest underwater images from the competition's history are featured in all their glory.

#### Dedication to the cause

The volume is edited by the always-engaging writer and editor Rosamund Kidman Cox, who in her short introduction manages to communicate the groundbreaking and vital work contained within the book's pages. Perhaps its most vital lesson is to emphasise the unwavering dedication of the photographers. It can be all too easy to forget there was actually someone behind that camera, making those difficult technical decisions and using their years of experience to ensure they rose to the surface with images that would be entertaining and, above all, educational.

Divers, as Kidman Cox rightfully points out, are a different breed. It's almost impossible to imagine the hardship that



© CHRISTIAN VIZI

**'Perhaps the book's most vital lesson is to emphasise the unwavering dedication of the photographers'**

goes into creating these images; to strap that equipment to yourself, plunge into icy waters and immerse yourself into what is essentially an unfamiliar world. Underwater photographers are explorers, astronauts of the ocean, the only ones among us that have truly met and documented alien life.

Navigating your way through the incredible images is to also find yourself confronted by photography's recent history. Back in 2004 the competition hosted its first digital entries, meaning that every image before this key year was shot on film – that's before the luxury of being able to review your images on the back of the camera.

For a second, put yourself in the shoes of an underwater photographer shooting film. It's difficult to imagine the nail-biting tension, anxiety and anticipation that must surely have marked the days waiting for the film to come back from the processing lab, particularly for those early pioneers in the field. These days, thankfully, digital technology has meant



'Tentacle Tornado' by Geo Cloete



'Opening to the underworld'. A Mexican cenote (deep well) photographed by Christian Vizi



'Pearls of Spring' by Solvin Zankl. A common toad in strings of toadspawn

that at least some of the burden has been lifted from the wet shoulders of underwater photographers. Such advances in cameras, lenses, housing and strobe lighting mean we (meaning we armchair enthusiasts) can now sit in the comfort of our homes and gaze upon the splendour of whales, crabs, frogs, seals, sharks, squid and the kind of underwater flora that looks like it has crawled out of H. P. Lovecraft's most intense fever dream.

Each image is accompanied by a generous slab of text that details the story and techniques behind the shot, meaning that this is far more than a book of pictures. It's a book that at all times strives to offer context and education. It also ensures that at every turn the voice of the photographer is very much heard in unison with the visuals. Every story is fascinating and all are well worth your time and attention. And that goes for this whole book, too. ★★★★★

AP

## Also out now

The latest and best books from the world of photography. By Oliver Atwell



© JOJAKIM CORTIS AND ADRIAN SONDEREGGER, 2018

### Double Take: Reconstructing the History of Photography

By Jojakim Cortis and Adrian Sonderegger, Thames & Hudson, £24.95, 128 pages, hardback, ISBN 978-0500021224



In 2011, Andreas Gursky set an auction-price record when his image 'Rhein II' was sold for a whopping \$4.3million. Watching this news with stunned curiosity were two artists, (see

*Reconstructing Reality*, AP 9 June) Jojakim Cortis and Adrian Sonderegger, both of whom decided to embark on a challenge: could they use models and studio lighting to recreate Gursky's image in the comfort of their Zurich studio? Quite incredibly, it worked. That one image was the genesis for the set of images that make up this really quite impressive volume. Following the Gursky image, the artists decided to recreate several famous 20th- and 21st-century landmark images including Frances Browne's shot of the doomed *Titanic* and Robert Capa's 'The Falling Soldier'. The dedication and craftsmanship that has gone into each uncanny image is breathtaking. This fantastic project questions photography's veracity and opens up a strong dialogue about how easy it is to trust visual imagery and our reliance on it to inform us. ★★★★★

### Birds in Pictures

By Markus Varesvuo, New Holland, £12.99, 384 pages, paperback, ISBN 978-1925546262



There can be no denying that bird photography is a genre of true dedication. Not only does it mean hours out on foot facing the elements, but it also requires that the keen bird photographer develop an unwavering and rock-like patience as he or she waits for a species to reveal itself. This excellent book by Markus Varesvuo, now in paperback, goes some way to making life easier by documenting a variety of bird species found across the globe. The book is packed with clear images and indispensable facts about each bird making it easier to develop an understanding of habit and behaviour. Even if you have no intention of setting out in pursuit of these birds, it's still a great addition to your collection. ★★★★★



# Viewpoint

## Tracy Calder

When a prizewinning image was disqualified from the Wildlife POTY competition the press gave it far too many column inches

Unless your head has been buried in a termite mound for the past few months you'll have heard about the disqualification of Marcio Cabral's anteater image, 'The Night Raider', which won the Animals in their Environment category of Wildlife Photographer of the Year. After a thorough investigation by five scientists, competition organisers (the Natural History Museum) concluded that the animal featured was likely to be a taxidermy specimen. As such, it breached the rules, which state 'entries must not deceive the viewer or attempt to misrepresent the reality of nature'. This roughly translates to: while anteaters do indeed raid termite mounds, stuffed ones most certainly don't.

News of this apparent deception will have riled wildlife photographers who often go to incredible lengths to capture natural behaviour in the wild. However since it was announced, every man and his dog has had an opinion about it. In the past few weeks CNN, Sky News and comedian David Mitchell have all spoken out about the disqualification, which considering there is so much in the world to get angry about right now seems a little strange. It's not the first time a picture has

been disqualified from the competition – in 2010, José Luis Rodriguez was stripped of the title amidst claims he hired a wolf from a wildlife park to appear in his winning photograph, 'Storybook Wolf'.

Photography has always had a somewhat shaky relationship with the truth, so why has this recent (alleged) act got everyone so fired up? Well for one thing it seems so unsporting. Wildlife photographer Laurie Campbell took an image of an osprey (below) from a hide atop a scaffold tower seven metres up. Like many wildlife photographers he spent hours, if not days, observing his subject before securing his picture. It would have been easier for Laurie to ring a taxidermist and order a stuffed bird, but he is a purist, naturalist and conservationist, and I'm sure half the fun for him is in the chase.

### Cost of groundbreaking imagery

Are we asking too much of wildlife photographers these days? In October last year we were treated to the glorious BBC series *Blue Planet II* where, among other delights, we saw an octopus making a shell suit, a cuttlefish hypnotizing its prey and a bird-eating fish flying through the air. These clips took months to secure, but were over in seconds. Over time we have come to expect groundbreaking imagery and photographers have been pushed harder to deliver the goods. It isn't enough to capture a termite mound covered in luminous insects; we also want to see an anteater in the composition.

The Wildlife Photographer of the Year competition places great stock in honesty and integrity, and it is this (apparent) betrayal of trust that has caused unrest in the wildlife photography community. But, really, no one died (apart from the anteater who I'm guessing shuffled off this mortal coil many years ago). We all make errors of judgement, but it's what we do to make amends that counts.

Tracy Calder is AP's Features Editor. She has written numerous photography books, including one on close-up and macro photography (her specialist subject). Her work has been displayed in The Photographers' Gallery and The National Portrait Gallery in London.



Laurie Campbell hid in a hide on a seven-metre high scaffold tower for this shot

**Do you have something you'd like to get off your chest?** Send us your thoughts in around 500 words to the address on page 55 and win a year's digital subscription to AP, worth £79.99

## In next week's issue

On sale Tuesday 19 June



# Mono summer

Set yourself a challenge this summer – go black & white with Tim Clinch's top tips



### Canon EOS 2000D

Is this the best option for first-time DSLR buyers? Audley Jarvis finds out

### Essential cloud storage

James Abbott compares six cloud-based backup services

### Tone control

Get tonal balance right every time you make a black & white print



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## Oscar Dewhurst

Oscar Dewhurst is an award-winning wildlife photographer from London. Currently studying for a Biology Research Master's at Durham University, he has photographed a wide range of subjects, from urban foxes and bitterns in London to primates in the Peruvian Amazon. See [www.oscardewhurst.com](http://www.oscardewhurst.com).

Singing whitethroat  
in summer, Suffolk  
Nikon D810, 600mm,  
1/320sec at f/7.1, ISO 1000

# Birds of summer

With long daylight hours and the breeding season in full swing, summer is a great time to hone your bird photography skills, says **Oscar Dewhurst**

**S**ummer is a great time to photograph birds. Many are in breeding plumage, activity levels are high and the long daylight hours mean that there is plenty of time in which you can get out and about. Whether it's making dedicated trips away from home for specific targets, or focusing on local wildlife, there is a plethora of subjects and ideas you can employ in this season for great photos. With a bit of thought and planning, here are some tips and ideas to make this summer a productive one photographically.

My favourite time of day for pretty much all wildlife photography is dawn and the couple of hours afterwards. Very few people are awake at these times, particularly with the early sunrises in summer, so you are likely to have the place to yourself. This time also coincides with the period of highest activity, with birds singing and actively feeding following the night. The hours just before sunset are also good, with a second peak in activity levels here. Perhaps the most important reason to try to get out early or late, however, is that the sun is low, so the light has a much nicer quality to it. Taking your photographs in the middle of the day when the sun is high will result in harsh shadows and highlights, making it difficult to avoid losing detail in these areas.

### Experiment with lighting

Light can turn an average photo into a great one, or a great photo into an average one. I know that sunrise and sunset aren't at particularly social times in summer (especially the painfully early starts required to get out for dawn), but getting out at these times really is worth it. As the sun is just above the horizon, you can experiment with different light angles from the more conventional 'over the shoulder' approach. Shooting into the light can be very effective, especially when there is a bit of mist. Some subjects lend themselves to backlighting more than others; light coming through birds' wings can look fantastic, for example. Similarly, birds with recognisable outlines make good models for silhouettes. While you're shooting, keep checking your histogram to ensure that your exposure is correct.

### Show some context

Although frame-filling images where feathers are brilliantly detailed and the background is perfectly clean are popular, it can also be good to zoom out a bit and show the bird within its environment. There is more than one way to do this: you can use a telephoto lens but shoot from further away, or use a wideangle lens and shoot from very close to the subject. With the former it is important to



ALL PICTURES © OSCAR DEWHURST

## KIT LIST

### Binoculars ▼

I carry binoculars with me as they are much lighter than my camera setup and clearer to look through than a viewfinder. They are invaluable for finding subjects to photograph.



### Telephoto lens ▲

I use a Nikkor 400mm f/2.8, to which I often add converters for extra reach. Using a camera with a cropped sensor is also a cheaper way of increasing your lens's magnification.



### Teleconverters ▲

These are another good (and relatively cheap) way to increase magnification. I regularly use both 1.4x and 2x converters, but remember to check that they will be compatible with your lens.



### Wideangle lens ▲

I always carry a wideangle lens. These are particularly useful when photographing confiding subjects such as puffins, and can be used to get images showing the birds in their environment.

### Waterproof clothes ▶

Getting low down gives images a much more intimate perspective, so wear clothes that are waterproof, or that you don't mind getting dirty when you're lying in muck.





**Song thrush hunting worms and caterpillars to take back to its chicks at the nest, London**  
Nikon D800, 600mm, 1/2500sec at f/5.6, ISO 640

make sure the bird stands out and isn't too insignificant in the frame. The latter method results in the bird appearing larger in the frame, but can be tricky to achieve because often it will require remote releases or camera trapping, both of which have several associated difficulties.

## Carry out projects

Projects are fun, and simple to do. Rather than going out with no plan other than capturing what happens to appear in front of you, consider focusing on something. It doesn't have to be a specific species, although these can work well; it could be focusing on a specific location such as a local nature reserve or farm. It could also include an element of conservation in the story, something that is becoming increasingly more important. Bear in mind that it doesn't have to be something particularly rare; one of the species to which I've dedicated most of my time (photographically) so far is foxes. In fact, commoner species are often preferable as they are easier to find, so you can experiment more with the photos and spend more time taking photos rather than searching for your subject. Local projects are often better than ones that would involve significant amounts of travel as you will be able to spend more time there. If you are trying to get noticed as a photographer, a cohesive, well-photographed project is a very good way to start. In addition, most competitions now have categories where you can enter several images as a portfolio, such as the 'British Seasons' category in the British Wildlife Photography Awards.

## Capture the action

Summer is a time of great activity. At the moment it's mid-breeding season, so there



**Bittern leaving her nest site to go and hunt, Suffolk. Nikon D800, 600mm, 1/1000sec at f/4, ISO 320**

## SUMMER BIRD SPECIES



### Wetland birds

Wetlands are a hive of activity at the moment. Many will have breeding colonies of birds such as gulls, waders and terns, giving opportunities to photograph interactions between parents and young, as well as the chaos that ensues when a predator such as a large gull or marsh harrier appears on the hunt for young birds.



### Barn owls

Barn owls hunt early in the morning and late in the evening during summer owing to the long daylight hours. Watch from a distance to determine where to position yourself. To avoid disturbing them, try using a portable hide (so long as you have the land owner's permission) or use a hedgerow to conceal yourself.



### Singing birds

Males will still be singing, which provides great photographic opportunities because many species repeatedly use the same song perches. Watch from a distance to begin with and once you have determined where you think they will sing from, position yourself close by and wait for them to return.



**Wren singing from ferns at dawn in dappled woodland, London**  
Nikon D800, 600mm, 1/320sec at f/5.6, ISO 1600

are plenty of opportunities to capture some behavioural images, from male birds singing, to courtship displays between pairs, and parents hunting and feeding to provide food for their young. Knowing your subject's biology well will increase your chances of capturing interesting behaviour, so do your research before getting out there. Another way to maximise your chances is to focus on a project and spend as much time as you can on it. That way, you will be more likely to see and photograph rare behaviours. Make sure you know how to operate and change your camera settings very



## Why it works

For me, this image of a singing wren (*Troglodytes troglodytes*) is a prime example that shows you can still get good images of common subjects. The wren is the UK's most abundant bird, with a population of 17 million individuals. Despite that, this is one of my favourite summer images for several reasons. The out-of-focus foliage in the foreground gives the impression that you are almost looking through the ferns, into the world of this tiny little bird. It is also in the middle of belting out its characteristic song, and if you

look closely you can see some condensation from its breath. Although I had a converter on, it is still small in the frame, which means there is more environment in the image, but it is still very noticeable. I'm also a big fan of the light; it was taken in woodland, so there is dappled sunlight coming through the canopy, which is responsible for the differing background shades. Overall I just really like the feel of this picture; to me it is very summery and always reminds me of the early morning when I took it.



## Common terms

These migrate to Europe from Africa each summer, and are one of our most graceful birds with their slight build, bright red beak and clean white plumage. They can be found on many of the UK's waterbodies. They will often carry out the same hunting route, allowing you to position yourself in advance.

## Birds in flowering heather

In August, heather will come into flower and turn a brilliant purple, which looks great in photos. Get out into heathland or moorland and look for subjects such as red grouse, stonechats, wheatears and other birds. Stay on paths though, because many of these species are ground nesting.

## Interactions

Young birds can be great photographic subjects because there will be interactions between them and the parents, such as parents feeding or sheltering them. It is important to make sure that you don't disturb them, however. If the birds start alarm calling then it would be wise to retreat.



Arctic tern calling at its breeding colony on the Isle of May, Scotland  
Nikon D300S, 200-400mm, 1/800sec at f/4, ISO 320

well – as well as you know the back of your hand; that way, you are more likely to successfully capture the action when it happens quickly!

## Ethics

Ethics isn't talked about often in technique articles, but I think it should be. Ultimately, people will have different views over various aspects of wildlife photography. While I would hope that the vast majority would disagree with something such as live baiting, there is a broad spectrum of opinions relating to issues such as digital manipulation, photographing captive subjects and baiting (non-live bait) subjects with set-ups. Personally, while disinclined to photograph captive subjects, I don't mind others doing it, as long as they disclose this information. It is usually obvious when someone posts an image of a tawny owl in daylight flying through a bluebell wood, or a perfect peregrine portrait in flowering heather, that it is a captive subject, and it is implicitly deceitful when this is not disclosed, with the photographer hoping that many do not realise it is not a wild bird. Similarly, photographers performing digital manipulation without disclosing it is the same. With regard to baiting, I am not against it, but would say that you must make sure birds do not become reliant on your food supply, and again, it never hurts to disclose how you captured the image. Ultimately, when it comes to photography, the welfare of the subject should always come first.

## 10 simple steps when visiting a seabird colony

### Stay overnight

Some colonies are located where you can stay overnight, allowing you to photograph in the best light and when the day trippers have gone home.

### Pack light

If you are going to be out for a long time, only pack what you are going to use so that you aren't carting around unnecessary weight for long periods.

### Slow shutter speeds

Experimenting with slow shutter speeds, particularly with birds in flight, can create some different images. Try to keep the head as sharp as possible though.

### Use a wideangle lens

Birds at seabird colonies are often very confiding, meaning you will be able to use wideangle lenses. These optics are excellent for showing more context.

### Experiment

Seabird colonies are great as there are lots of birds and they are often very tolerant. Once you have got the more traditional images, take some time to try something different. This could be slow shutter panning images of birds flying, or long-exposure wideangles showing the colony as a whole with streaks created by flying birds.

### Wear a cap

Arctic terns, which nest at several northern seabird colonies, are vicious defenders of their nest site, and will attack people walking through the colony by pecking at their head. Be warned that this can draw blood, so a cap is essential protection!

### Tripod

If using a heavy super-telephoto lens, a tripod and gimbal head are very helpful for minimising camera shake. They are also useful when photographing birds in flight.

### Use flash

At either end of the day, flash can be an effective tool when used well. Be alert to signs of the birds being distressed by it, and if they are, stop using flash.

### Dawn and dusk

These are the best times to photograph birds as activity is highest and the light is at its best. When the sun is low you can also experiment with silhouettes and backlit images.

### Take your time

There will be a lot going on, and so it's often worth taking some time just to sit back and admire the birds and think about what photos you would like to capture rather than running around trying to photograph everything you see in a mad panic!



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## LETTER OF THE WEEK

### Remembering dad

I was interested to see your recent feature (*Vintage cameras: collectable, usable and affordable*, AP 2 June) because I recently inherited my father's Canon T50 SLR (with flashgun and 50mm lens). It may not classify as vintage but I like it, and it seems to work well.

Recently, my sister and I were given photographs of our father and even some with our mother, which we hadn't seen before. These have given us a precious insight into their lives before they became 'Mum and Dad', which is even more special now because dad died last month. This is an extremely difficult time but having his camera and the photographs have helped me feel closer to him, and I have used some of the photos in a memory book, which is a little memorial to him. I love digital photography as it gives me a freedom that film doesn't and has made photography, to me, more affordable/accessible. But seeing my dad when he was young has been a real gift. I would like to encourage people not to leave it till it's too late to share those photographic memories when they can be fully enjoyed, because it doesn't matter what equipment is used or if the shots aren't perfect, it's recording that moment forever that's important. This is why I really like photography – because it's



PROVIDED BY JANE BOSWELL

Jane treasures this photo of her Dad, taken when he was young

capturing memories. And as we've lost loved ones (people and pets) over the years, our photographs have become more treasured, whether printed or digitally stored. Although I strive to take better photographs, I take/keep shots that others would probably delete because they aren't perfect. But perfection isn't important to me; the subject is.

**Jane Boswell**

**Fantastic work, Jane. It's easy to get bogged down in the quest for technical perfection and forget that the subject of a photograph is often equally, if not more, important if it has strong emotional connections – Geoff Harris, deputy editor**

### A Royal response

I wonder if I might comment upon the somewhat strange letter from Meckle Hausman (*Inbox*, AP 2 June) in which he questions the relevance of RPS distinctions to 'successful professionals'. Surely he is completely missing the point. I cannot imagine why professional photographers would be attracted to those distinctions. They are, in no sense, qualifications and are unlikely to impress anyone outside the somewhat-restricted world of the RPS itself and the enthusiastic amateurs in camera clubs. What those distinctions do, superbly, is offer amateur photographers an excellent opportunity to set themselves meaningful challenges and indulge in project-based photography. Those of us who pursue them are not interested in impressing anyone. We are dedicated to self-improvement in our chosen hobby. I particularly object to the implied criticism of 'RPS panellists' in Meckle Hausman's letter. I personally know eight or nine men and women who selflessly give their time and expertise to RPS distinctions panels. Without exception, I have huge respect for their own photographic work – work of a standard that very, very few professionals could ever hope to emulate.

**Eric Begbie**

I was surprised to find a bunch of grapes courtesy of Meckle Hausman in my latest copy of AP – unfortunately the grapes were of the sour variety. Many of us enjoy the challenge of obtaining a distinction from the RPS or other amateur or professional organisations. The RPS panellists have all achieved success in their chosen discipline, and rather than the stifling judgements mentioned by Meckle Hausman, I suggest

anyone in doubt go along to an RPS assessment day. Now at 82 years and having retired from the University of Leeds as a departmental technical photographer, I still enjoy photography as an art form and I submit images for publication, competitions and exhibitions. I gain pleasure from the privilege of placing letters after my name. Now as an amateur I have complete freedom of expression rather than the constraints often placed upon the professional. If the challenge of obtaining letters after your name is egotistical, then so be it.

**David Horner, FRPS DPAGB  
Winston Churchill Fellow**

**Thanks for writing in – there are some great responses here. It can be difficult for amateurs to find a motivating challenge sometimes, and the process of getting a photographic society distinction, or achieving camera club competition success, certainly provides one – Geoff Harris, deputy editor**

### A vintage crop

How odd that you should publish John Wade's article about vintage cameras (*Vintage cameras: collectable, usable and affordable*, AP 2 June) two weeks after I decided to revisit a camera that I owned in the early '70s. I bought a Zorki 4 in 1972, during a year between school and Durham University, and soon sold it because of the unwieldy (but real leather) case, the viewfinder's dubious accuracy, and the clunkiness of the shutter. Not to mention the way the frame spacing required cutting through sprocket holes to divide the film into strips of six for filing (which made getting the strips into the filing sheet far harder!) However, the quality was good, as Mr Wade



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Andy Kirby took this image of the Lofotens during a 12-day photo workshop

says. So I decided to get another one from eBay: easy and quick, it was £34 including postage. I've been playing ever since, in the same way as a driver may enjoy the odd adventure with an elderly Land Rover. I was impressed by the overall condition, and the results match my 1971 model. For those who may be unused to film, perhaps this is the way to try it out, cheaply? I have attached a shot I took in 1972 using Tri-X film (see bottom left).

**John Duder**

**Some great suggestions here, John, and we are thrilled you found John Wade's article helpful – Nigel Atherton, editor**

### A bust flush

Your recent articles on home printing have been very informative and helpful. Like many, I'm an amateur who prints intermittently, for camera club competitions and so on. Unfortunately, this irregular use tends to make inkjet printers expensive to run. I didn't realise that if not used, they flush ink through the heads to clean them. Some of the more high-end printers actually flush ink on the basis of a timer, not on use. The consequence being that if you use a printer infrequently, it will cost you more in ink for cleaning the printer, than for making prints. I have never seen this addressed in articles about the costs of home printing. Maybe it's something you could cover in a future article? After reading AP for 40 years, it's still as informative and enjoyable as ever, so keep it up!

**Peter**

**Thanks, Peter. Printing is a really important topic, so watch**

out for more features in forthcoming issues of AP  
– Nigel Atherton, editor

### Applause for Clapp

It was with considerable interest that I read David Clapp's balanced *Viewpoint* column (AP 2 June) about the Lofotens in Norway as a workshop destination, having spent 12 days on a Lofoten and Senja workshop in the early part of April this year. The question was posed as to whether one would be happy to share the moment with – in the example pictured at Reine – 54 others, or whether one would shudder at the thought. Having stood on the same walkway at Reine as that illustrated, I find 'shudder' an appropriate term. Since there were only five of us the shout 'no movement please' was effective in ensuring the walkway did not shudder or vibrate during a six-second exposure (see my image above). I fear that this would not have been the case with 54 other photographers!

Lofoten and Senja are, indeed, wonderful locations, but the answer to David's conundrum is to choose the time of year with care. True, we did not witness any aurora, but we had Flakstad beach without the seven minibuses he mentions and that, and almost all the other locations entirely to ourselves. All this, a blizzard, turbulent skies, wonderful dawn and evening light and snow down to sea level – what more could a photographer want?

**Andy Kirby**

**Wow, what a picture. It looks like you enjoyed a very fruitful workshop indeed, Andy – Nigel Atherton, editor**

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Exterior of the cloisters seen from the Cloister Court at Lacock Abbey

Below: Henry Fox Talbot of Lacock Abbey



## PHOTO ROADSHOW

# The home of photography

Once home to Henry Fox Talbot, Lacock Abbey is a country house with monastic roots, explains **Justin Minns**

**L**acock Abbey began life in 1232 as an abbey and nunnery. In the 1500s it was turned into a Tudor country house, and the medieval cloisters were incorporated into the design along with Italian Renaissance-style additions. John Ivory Talbot inherited Lacock in the 18th century and gave it a Gothic makeover, giving it its wonderfully quirky architectural styles.

Once home to Henry Fox Talbot, Lacock Abbey has additional interest for photographers because it was here that Talbot made the earliest surviving photographic negative: an image of one of the oriel windows. The text accompanying the negative claims that as many as 200 squares of glass could be counted in the image (with the help of a lens). The abbey houses a museum to celebrate Talbot's substantial contributions to photography.

TOP IMAGE © NATIONAL TRUST IMAGES/ANDREW BUTLER

Photographing NT properties: Visitors to National Trust properties can take pictures out of doors for their own private use. Amateur photography (without flash and use of a tripod) is permitted inside some National Trust properties at the general manager's discretion. The National Trust does not permit photography at its properties for any commercial or editorial use without first seeking permission from National Trust Images. Fees may be charged. (Licensing images of National Trust properties through professional image libraries isn't permitted). Requests to use any photographs for commercial or editorial use should be directed to [images@nationaltrust.org.uk](mailto:images@nationaltrust.org.uk).

### Justin's top tips

**1** Make the most of overcast days by using a macro lens to shoot flower portraits. Look for the perfect bloom and aim for a simple composition free of distractions, or fill the frame with the flower.

**2** Take inspiration from the subject of Fox Talbot's pioneering negative and photograph Lacock's windows, or rather the light and shadow they cast. Shadows make great lead-in lines or abstract subjects in themselves.

**3** Use the high ISO capability of modern cameras to shoot handheld in low light. Turn on image stabilisation and use your lens's widest aperture to increase the shutter speed. Lean against a wall to steady yourself and get sharp handheld shots.



### Fact file

#### Lacock Abbey

**Location:** Lacock, near Chippenham, Wiltshire, SN15 2LG. 3 miles south of Chippenham. M4 exit 17, to Chippenham. Follow A350 until you reach Lacock, following signs leading to main car park.

**Cost:** Free to National Trust members. Refer to National Trust website for ticket prices.

**Opening times:** Abbey rooms are open 11am-5pm until 28 October. Cloisters, grounds and museum are open 10.30am-5.30pm until 28 October and then 11am-4pm.

# Shooting advice



## Justin Minns

Justin is a landscape photographer and workshop leader who has been working with the National Trust for several years. His images have been widely recognised in photography competitions including Landscape Photographer of the Year. Visit [www.justinminns.co.uk](http://www.justinminns.co.uk).

## Shooting in low light

Low light can make shooting handheld difficult, but there are times when tripods are not permitted or can be impractical. Thankfully there are things you can do to improve your hit rate. If your lens (or camera body) has it, turn on image stabilisation, as some manufacturers claim sharp shots are possible at shutter speeds up to 5 stops slower with this feature switched on. Stand with your feet slightly apart and back straight, tuck your elbows into your sides and exhale before squeezing the shutter button. Leaning against a wall can also help with stability. Open the lens's aperture to its widest setting and raise the ISO, although this can introduce noise, especially in the shadows. It's important to get the exposure correct in camera, as brightening a high ISO image will also cause noise to appear. It's better to have a sharp image with a little noise than a soft one because of camera shake – you can always use noise-reduction software later.

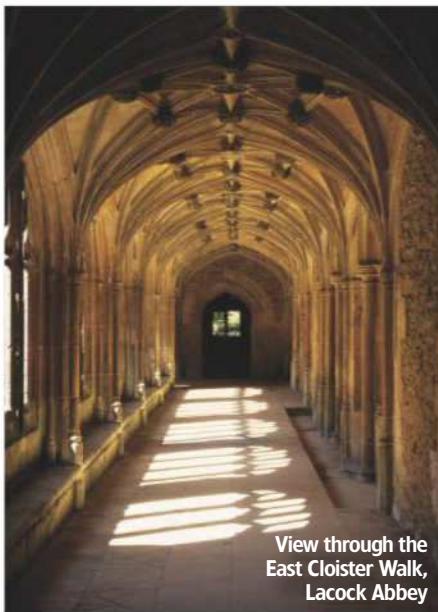
## Flower portraits

Gardens are often at their best during summer, but they are also at their busiest. This is the time to experiment with a macro lens and shoot individual plants. A garden like that at Lacock Abbey has hundreds of specimens to choose from. First, choose the perfect bloom, as even small imperfections will be obvious in the final picture. Second, keep the composition simple and avoid distractions such as leaves, flowers or extremely bright patches of light. Finally, light can make or break flower portraits: bright overcast days when the light is soft, are ideal. A diffuser will help to filter strong sunlight and a reflector can be handy for lifting the shadows, too. With a macro lens, depth of field can be just millimetres, so your focusing has to be spot on. Identify the most important part of the flower and train your lens on that.



Crocses in the grounds at Lacock Abbey

© NATIONAL TRUST IMAGES AND WARWICK



View through the East Cloister Walk, Lacock Abbey

© NATIONAL TRUST IMAGES AND WARWICK

## KIT LIST



### ▲ Panasonic LUMIX DC-G9

Offering 20.3MP with no anti-aliasing filter, the G9 is superb at capturing fine detail. It has super-fast AF, and 4K 60p/50p video recording, too.



### ▲ LUMIX G 30mm f/2.8 macro

With a minimum-focusing distance of just 10.5cm and optical image stabilisation, this macro lens is ideal for flower portraits.



### ▲ Panasonic LUMIX DMC-LX100

A fast f/1.7-2.8, 24-75mm (35mm equiv) zoom lens and 1in sensor in a small, light body make this compact camera a great choice for shooting shadows handheld.



### ▲ LUMIX G 15mm f/1.7

Weighing in at just 115g with a fast f/1.7 aperture, this lightweight prime lens is perfect for shooting flowers handheld in low light.



# Join Panasonic LUMIX at Lacock Abbey

Come along from 10am-4pm on 30 June/1 July

AS PART of its long-standing relationship as official photography partner of the National Trust, Panasonic will be holding events around a variety of photogenic National Trust locations over the coming months. The team will be at Lacock Abbey on 30 June and 1 July.

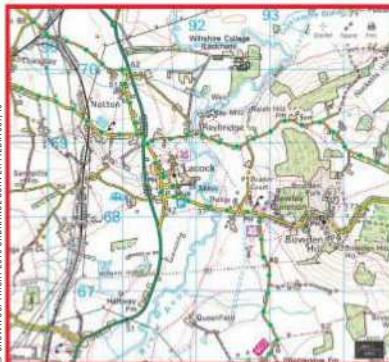
The abbey is located at the heart of Lacock village within its own woodland grounds. The house is a quirky mix of various architectural styles, built on the foundations of a former nunnery. Visitors can

experience the atmosphere of the medieval rooms and cloister court, giving a sense of the abbey's monastic past.

On the weekend of 30 June/1 July Panasonic LUMIX will be offering visitors to Lacock Abbey the chance to try its latest cameras and lenses, and to take advantage of expert advice. Normal entry fees (and photo restrictions) apply – see page 20 for details. To find out more, visit [www.nationaltrust.org.uk/lacock-abbey-fox-talbot-museum-and-village](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/lacock-abbey-fox-talbot-museum-and-village).

## How to get there

- **By car:** 3 miles south of Chippenham. M4 exit 17, signposted to Chippenham (A350). Follow A350 (signposted Poole/Warminster) until you reach Lacock, following signs leading to main car park. Parking: 220 yards (pay and display). No visitor parking on village streets.
- **By bus:** Faresaver X34/Chippenham to Frome.



## National Trust photo competition

Capture nature at its best this summer for the chance to be featured on the cover of the 2019 National Trust Handbook or membership card. The theme is 'Our space to explore' and the closing date is 2 September 2018. For details (including terms and conditions) see [www.nationaltrust.org.uk/photography-competition](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/photography-competition).

The roadshow offers you the chance to try out new gear



## Other events coming up

Knole	Kent	7/8 July
Mount Stewart	Northern Ireland	18/19 August
Giant's Causeway	Northern Ireland	1/2 September
Dunham Massey	Cheshire	8/9 September

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# Defying the odds

Sports photographer **Samo Vidic** talks about photographing high-achieving disabled athletes, including Paralympic swimmer Darko Đurić

**A**s a professional sports photographer, Canon Ambassador Samo Vidic photographs the world's top athletes for leading brands and publications. But in his latest project Samo wanted to shine a light on a sometimes-overlooked group of sporting heroes: disabled athletes who have overcome the odds to achieve great things in the sports they love.

'Disabled athletes are rarely seen in the media in comparison with non-disabled ones,' Samo says. 'I wanted to show different kinds of sports people and tell their life stories.' In this project, he wanted to emphasise the athletes' sporting prowess and the considerable obstacles they had to overcome.

Slovenian photographer Samo has focused on sport throughout a busy career, which began in 1999.

A keen sportsman in his youth who enjoyed ski-jumping, football and tennis, he initially qualified as a mechanical engineer before discovering photography. He considered a career in reportage before attending a sports-photography workshop, and he realised that he could combine his two passions. 'I loved photography and everything connected with sports and the outdoors, so I was immediately hooked,' Samo says.

His two camera bodies for these shoots were the Canon EOS 5D Mark IV and the Canon EOS 6D Mark II, fitted with Canon's EF 50mm f/1.2L USM lens, EF

24-70mm f/2.8L II USM lens, EF 16-35mm f/2.8L II USM lens and EF 8-15mm f/4L Fisheye USM lens.

The combination of bodies and lenses enabled Samo to explore a range of creative approaches – each shoot allowed him to execute a different challenging technical approach, from light trails to underwater action shots. Samo photographed his subjects in two contrasting ways. One was a portrait, showing their personalities and the physical challenges they faced and the other was a dynamic action shot focusing on their world-class achievements.

Samo's images celebrate the personalities, skills and sheer determination of some truly inspirational people.



Above: Born with one arm and no legs, Darko Đurić is a Paralympian  
Canon EOS 6D Mark II, 16-35mm, 1/200sec at f/5, ISO 200



Paralympic sprinter Libby Clegg  
Canon EOS 5D Mark IV, 24-70mm, 0.3sec at f/3.5, ISO 400



Libby is registered blind  
Canon EOS 6D Mark II, 24-70mm, 1/80sec at f/6.3, ISO 1600



## Case study Photographing Darko

ONE OF Samo's subjects was Slovenian swimmer Darko Đurić. Despite being born with only one arm and no legs, he has become a Paralympian, a double world champion and broken the world record in the 50m Butterfly S4 class. When shooting Darko's portrait and action shot, Samo wanted to convey his story. 'Darko only has one arm, but the water gives him wings, somehow. That's what I wanted to show,' he says.

The sports shoot took place at a pool in Ljubljana, Slovenia. With Darko posing on a diving board for the portrait, Samo got two assistants to throw buckets of water at him from left and right, creating wing-like shapes with the water. Samo froze the movement of the water with his studio flashes, having placed the main

light 3m in front of the swimmer and a backlight 5m above him.

For the action shot, Samo set up two studio flashes beside the pool, lighting the subject from above, and one behind a porthole in the pool, pointing at the subject from below the water's surface. Then he went underwater in his scuba-diving gear to photograph Darko in action. The Canon EOS 5D Mark IV, with a Canon EF 16-35mm f/2.8L III USM wideangle lens attached, communicated with the lights via cables connected to a transmitter set up beside the pool.

Samo used the camera's AI Servo setting to get pin-sharp images, and he made use of the Canon EOS 5D Mark IV's fast, continuous shooting mode to get 6.5 frames per second. 'If you



Water creates the illusion of wings  
Canon EOS 6D Mark II, 24-70mm, 1/200sec at f/4.5, ISO 200

photograph a swimmer with two arms, you have more chances of a good shot, but because Darko only has one arm, I needed to make sure I maximised my opportunities to capture him in a striking position [with his right arm reaching forwards and face visible],' he explains.

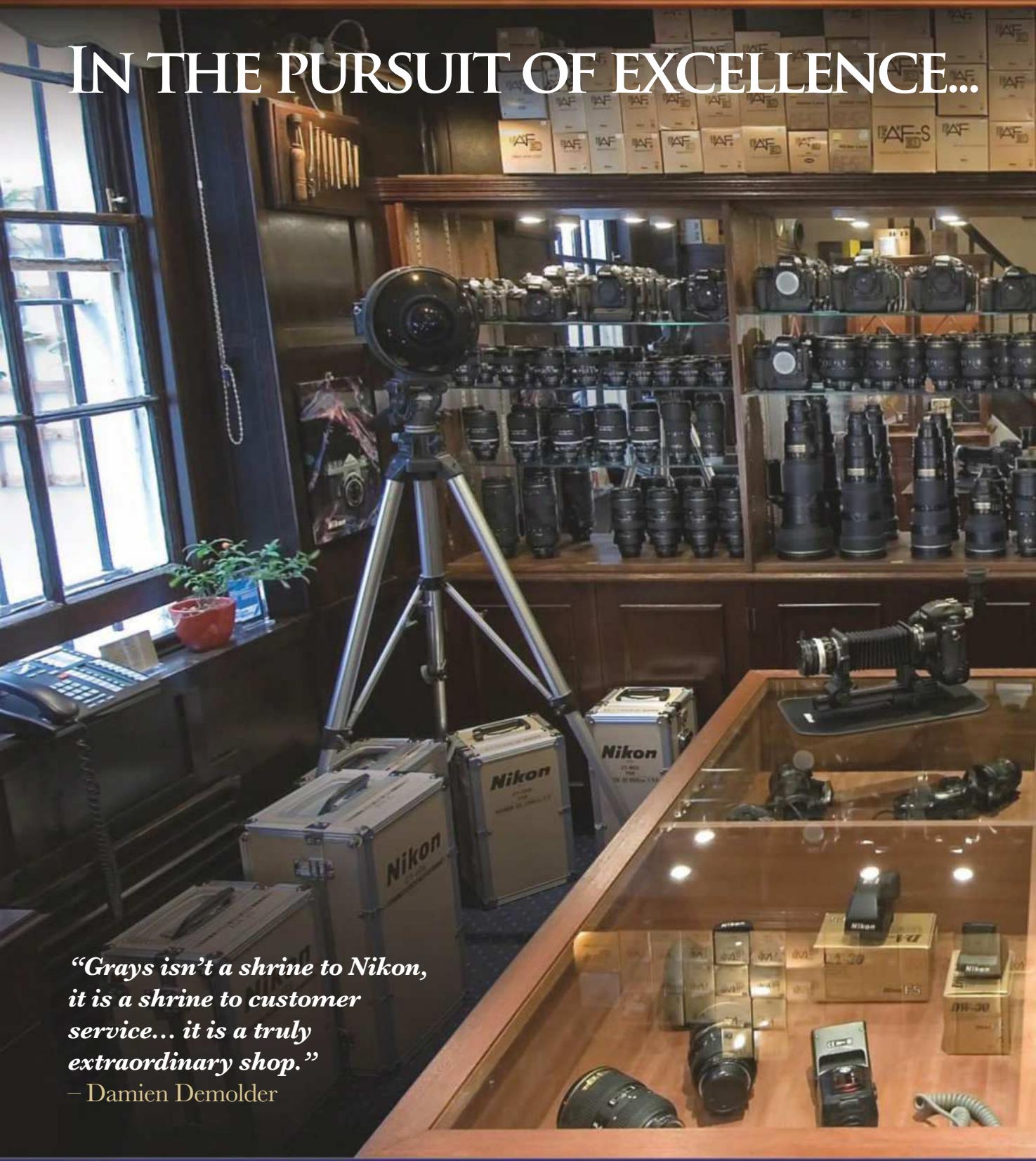
'It was my first time shooting with the Canon EOS 5D Mark IV underwater and everything worked perfectly. The AF was great, and the images are sharp, which is the most important thing.'

To see videos and read more about how Samo Vidic created the in-camera effects in his 'Defying the Odds' series, visit [www.canon.co.uk/pro/stories](http://www.canon.co.uk/pro/stories).

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**1 Shoot in aperture-priority mode**

I almost always shoot at the extremes of the shutter speed range: fast shutter speeds for freezing action, slow shutter speeds for creating a sense of movement. By shooting in aperture-priority exposure mode, very quickly I can change my f/number, let the camera adjust shutter speed, and rapidly switch from my fastest available shutter speed to the slowest, without worrying about whether there's sufficient light, which means I never miss a shot.



# Wild things

From perfecting **your fieldcraft skills to focusing on fast-moving subjects**, five professional photographers offer their expert advice on creating your best wildlife photographs yet

## Preparation

### Chris Weston



Chris was listed by *Outdoor Photography* as 'one of the world's 40 most influential wildlife photographers'. His credits include the BBC, *The Sunday Times*, and *National Geographic*. He hosts The Complete Photographer Masterclass online training course. See [www.chrisweston.photography](http://www.chrisweston.photography) and [www.chrisweston.training](http://www.chrisweston.training).

Avoid the standard record shot and say something more about your subject



### 2 Don't take record shots

Before you press the shutter, ask yourself the question, 'How would I caption this image?' If the only answer you can come up with is the species name – a tiger, a bear, an eagle, etc – stop! Wait for a better shot. A picture of a bird singing, for example, is far more compelling than a photograph of the same bird with its beak closed.



### 3 Anticipate the action

About 90% of my job is biology. Knowing your subject really well helps you find ideas for pictures beyond basic record shots. It also enables you to anticipate the action, which means you're more likely to capture the moment when it comes.

### 4 Use the light

Look for lighting situations that add mood and drama. Backlighting is great for silhouettes and contre-jour. Soft lighting can add an ethereal mood. Side lighting, with its stark contrast and deep shadows, adds tension and visual energy.



## 5 Set focus mode to continuous

In continuous focus mode, the camera is constantly adjusting the point of focus to keep track of the subject as it moves around the picture space, which, being wildlife, it tends to do a lot. When the movement is predictable I restrict the number of AF sensors used by the camera to track the subject, as this speeds AF performance. When movement is unpredictable, such as a bird in flight, I set all the AF points to tracking, to give the camera the best chance of staying focused on the subject.

## ESSENTIAL KIT

A couple of years ago I switched to mirrorless cameras because of the benefits gained in carrying smaller, lighter equipment. My main bodies are a Fujifilm X-T2, which I supplement with a medium format Fujifilm GFX 50S. I have a range of Fujinon zoom lenses – 10-24mm f/4, 16-55mm f/2.8, 50-140mm f/2.8 (my favourite lens) and 100-400mm f/4.5-5.6 – as well as a 35mm f/1.4 standard prime. I'm eagerly awaiting the release of Fujifilm's new 200mm f/2 telephoto prime.



## 6 Test your hide

Garden feeders and birdbaths provide the perfect setting in which to test any hide without causing disturbance. Take lighting, viewpoint and background into consideration when deciding where to position it. Working with the likes of a 70-300mm zoom on a cropped-sensor camera from a distance of 4-5 metres should be fine.

## Hides

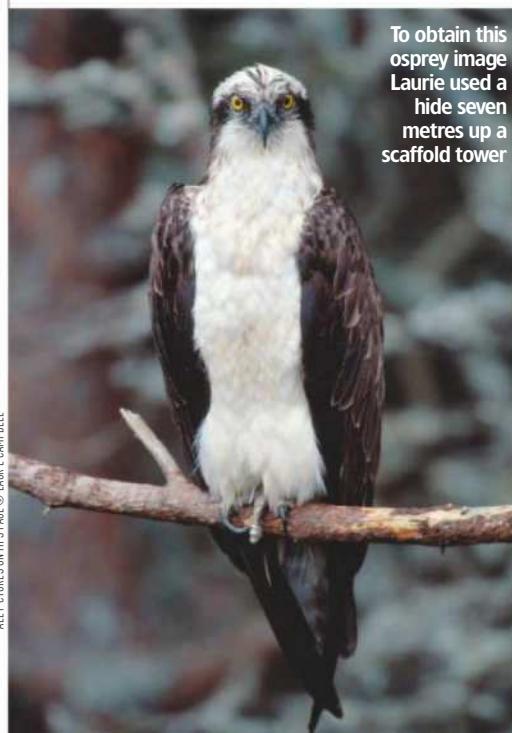
### Laurie Campbell



Laurie has been photographing Scotland's landscape, wildlife and flora for almost 50 years. In 2014 he was honoured with the Lifetime Achievement Award at the annual RSPB Nature of Scotland Awards for the lasting contribution his photography has made to nature conservation in Scotland. See [www.lauriecampbell.com](http://www.lauriecampbell.com).

## 7 Build up to wary subjects

Having gained experience in using hides to photograph relatively confiding subjects, working with more wary ones in the wider countryside requires more planning and care. Research your subject well, obtain landowners' permission and camouflage hides to avoid them being seen. Do all this and a whole new world of nature photography awaits.



To obtain this osprey image Laurie used a hide seven metres up a scaffold tower



## 8 Get comfortable

Purchase some camouflage netting to drape over your shelter, both to increase the opacity of the material, and to have a surface onto which natural materials such as bunches of long grass can be added. Think too about your comfort. A good seat may encourage you to wait longer, and the longer you wait, the more you will see.

## 9 Choose a hide

There are some fantastic ready-made hides on the market, but you can always start out by adapting inexpensive dome-shaped tents and pop-up shelters found in outdoor shops, and even some supermarkets. Essentially, they need to be freestanding and reasonably dark in colour.

## 10 Perfect your fieldcraft skills

Long telephoto lenses alone won't necessarily guarantee success when trying to photograph shy wildlife subjects. Getting close often has a lot more to do with applying a bit of fieldcraft and adopting a targeted approach. Using some form of hide can make a big difference. It's a case of seeing without being seen.

## ESSENTIAL KIT

I use Nikon full-frame and cropped-sensor bodies with either 500mm or 200-400mm lenses, a Gitzo G1548 carbon fibre tripod with a Sachtler fluid head, and a Nikon TC-14E III teleconverter. I always carry spare batteries and memory cards, a Nikon MC-30A cable release, Swiss Army penknife, notebook, pencil, food and drink, and a Billingham Hadley shoulder bag.

## Birds

### Ben Hall



Ben Hall is one of Britain's leading wildlife photographers. He has won numerous awards and his images are sold all over the world. He has appeared on TV and radio programmes and also runs photography workshops in the UK and further afield. Both small groups and one-to-one days are available. See [www.benhallphotography.com](http://www.benhallphotography.com).



ALL PICTURES ON THIS PAGE © BEN HALL

### 14 Look for natural frames

When it comes to composing your pictures, look for parts of the environment that can be used to frame your subject. This helps to draw the viewer's eye towards the bird whilst also creating a sense of depth.



### 11 Research your subject

Learn as much as possible about the habits of your intended subject. A simple Google search will bring up a wealth of information such as typical habitat, breeding behaviour and feeding habits. This is invaluable information and will save countless hours when out in the field.

### 12 Back button focus

Using the back button can give you a huge advantage. By focusing with your thumb, you can leave the camera set to predictive focus mode at all times. When you need to lock the focus, simply press and release the back button and your focus is locked allowing you to re-compose. If your subject is moving, simply hold the back button down to track it.

Panning takes time to perfect, but the results are worth it



### 15 Know your location

Familiarise yourself with a local area and spend as much time as possible revisiting it under various lighting conditions and seasons. You will begin to build up crucial knowledge about not only the birds that can be found there, but also the way the light changes, and possible photographic opportunities.

### 16 Commit to manual

A camera can often be fooled into under- or over-exposure by reading from a bright or dark background. Take control and dial in your exposure manually to prevent this from happening. This is best done under conditions where the light is relatively constant.

### ESSENTIAL KIT

My go-to setup for most bird photography is a Canon EOS-1D X with 500mm lens. The quality of the lens is superb while the shallow depth of field due to the wide aperture is perfect for separating a subject from its surroundings. For wider images that show the subject in the environment I tend to opt for either a 100-400mm or 70-200mm lens.

## Underwater

### Dr Alex Mustard



Dr Alexander Mustard has been taking underwater photographs for 30 years. In 2013 he was named European Wildlife Photographer of the Year. His most recent books are *Underwater Photography Masterclass* and *Secrets of the Seas* in collaboration with Professor of Marine Conservation Callum Roberts. See [www.amustard.com](http://www.amustard.com).



### 17 Search for details

Close focusing lenses, such as wideangles and macro lenses, are essential underwater. A wideangle lens lets you photograph a large creature such as a hammerhead shark from as close as possible, to produce a clear image. A macro will pick out details even in murky waters.

### 18 Control the light

Flashes are essential for underwater photography and provide your main light source. Once you go deeper than snorkelling depths, colours are absorbed by water and you need a flash to restore them for eye-catching pictures. Learning to control flashes precisely to give exactly the quality of light that suits your subject is the most important skill in underwater shooting.

Water absorbs light and colour, making underwater flashes essential



### 19 Have a plan

You can't change lenses underwater and the best images come when your equipment is optimised for the shot. Underwater photographers learn not to just snap at anything, but to go underwater with a plan of what and how they will shoot. It is a good discipline for all photography.

### 20 Try snorkelling

You don't need to scuba dive to be an underwater photographer. Life in ponds, rivers and rock pools can be photographed without even swimming! Snorkelling is actually the best way to approach many of the ocean's most charismatic creatures, like dolphins, seals and whales.



### 21 Move in close

Get close, and then get even closer. Shooting through water robs images of colour, contrast and clarity so getting close makes a big difference to your image quality. Luckily most marine life is not naturally afraid of people, so you will often be able to photograph it from within touching distance.

### ESSENTIAL KIT

Underwater photography is equipment intensive, but my go-to setup is a Nikon D5 and Nikkor 13mm fisheye lens, plus a Subal ND5 housing with two Seacam Seafash 150 underwater strobes. I use a wide range of lenses with this camera and also use Nikon D850 and Olympus OM-D E-M10 Mark III cameras in underwater housings.

## Safari

### Ann and Steve Toon



Ann and Steve Toon have been photographing the wildlife of Southern Africa for 20 years, and have produced three books on the subject. They have a great interest in conservation, and use their journalistic backgrounds to explore issues affecting conservation. The Toons run workshops in the UK and safaris in Africa. See [www.toonphoto.com](http://www.toonphoto.com).



### 22 Get set for action

Our default setting when we're on safari is to select aperture priority and shoot wide open with a relatively high ISO so that we're ready to fire off a fast burst of shots when the action starts. Once we've got something 'in the bag' we can then finesse camera settings further as the situation develops.

### 23 Shoot into the light

Conventional, front-lit wildlife images are everywhere so our favourite way to photograph on safari is against the light – especially at dawn and dusk when there's the chance for striking dramatic silhouettes and dramatic rim-lighting. To saturate the rich colours and enhance contrast we regularly underexpose by a stop of light.

### 24 Dare to be different

We're always on the lookout for a fresh take on a frequently photographed subject. Don't be afraid to break the rules or get creative when photographing wildlife: for example, experimenting with slow shutter speeds and trying something more abstract.

### 25 Think 'landscape' for wildlife

Resist the temptation to shoot all your subjects up close on safari just because you can. We often like to pull back and do 'animal-scapes', showing off 'small' foreground subjects – especially Africa's iconic big game – against the wonderful scenery or simple backdrop of a vast sky.



ALL PICTURES ON THIS PAGE © ANN AND STEVE TOON

### 26 Make subjects 'pop'

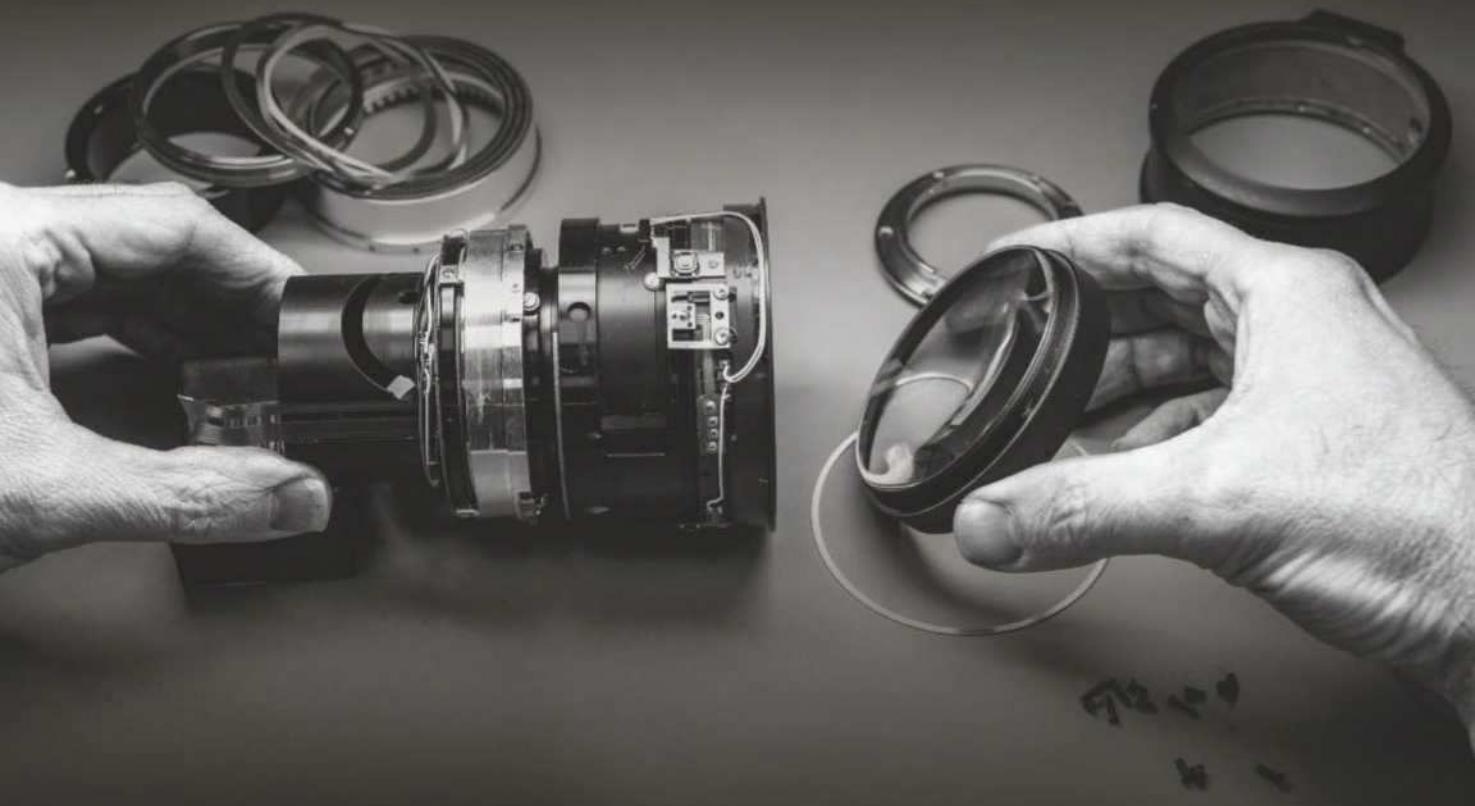
A great trick to make wildlife subjects, particularly light-toned ones, really stand out is to shoot them against a dark background and dial in a bit of negative exposure – a third of a stop or two depending on the situation. This darkens the backdrop further and adds impact to your image.

### ESSENTIAL KIT

Our current favourite 'combo' is the Canon EOS-1D X Mark II with 100-400mm zoom. The camera performs well at high ISOs and its fast frame rate, coupled with the flexibility and portability of the telephoto zoom, increases our reaction speeds, extends shooting time in the bush and is great for tracking moving subjects and photographing flight.

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# Celebrating today's engineers

Forget old factories, modern engineering is diverse and forward thinking, as the IET photography competition aims to show

**E**ngineering and technology is exciting and fast-changing, shaping the world around us and improving the quality of our daily lives. From our smartphones and tablets, to our lighting and heating, the food we eat and medicines we take, engineers are inventing new ways to do things and finding solutions that will make the world a better place. And yet the profession is confronted with a big image problem: traditional images of engineering and engineers that are used time and time again focus on hard hats and dirty overalls, giving the profession an outdated stereotype.

A recent study by the Institution of Engineering and Technology (IET) found that this stereotypical image of an engineer is quite prominent among school children and adults, with most youngsters believing a typical engineer is white, middle-aged and male. And the tools he might use include a hard hat, laptop, high-visibility jacket, mobile phone and protective eye wear, and he carries a toolbox. Shockingly, it appears that children can't see the opportunity for future female engineers, with less than one in 10 children imagining the typical engineer to be a woman.

These outdated and fixed ideas are damaging to the industry, especially when it has been well documented that the UK faces a nationwide skills shortage – 203,000 people with Level 3+ engineering skills will be required each year to meet demand through to 2024, but it's estimated that there will be an annual shortfall of 59,000 engineers and technicians to fill these roles.

## Competition

With this in mind, the IET has launched its annual photography competition. Supported by *Amateur Photographer* and back with a new name, the IET Engineering & Technology Photographer of the Year 2018 is open to any photograph of an engineering-related subject that captures the dynamic, creative and progressive face of engineering and engineers today.

*Gadget Show* host and journalist Georgie Barrat is fronting the search for this year's winners. Passionate about getting more girls into coding and encouraging young people to study STEM subjects at GCSE level and beyond, her mission is to do away with the male-skewed angle in which tech is often portrayed.



**Naf Selmani's 2017 overall winning image 'The Hive'**

'The image of engineering in the media is really outdated and doesn't reflect how exciting, creative and varied engineering careers can be,' says Georgie. 'That's why this photography competition is vital in challenging public misconceptions and inspiring the next generation.'

To enter, you need to take images of engineering-related subjects that capture the innovative, imaginative and fast-developing face of engineering and engineers today. The winning images will help demonstrate the ingenuity, breadth and vibrancy of the engineering world. For full details see below.

## HOW TO ENTER

To enter, please send your images by **23:59 (BST) on Friday, 28 September 2018**, to **photography@theiet.org**, along with a completed entry form, which is available to download from **www.theiet.org/photo-competition**.

The competition is open internationally, subject to local laws, and is split into two age categories: youth (16 and under) and adult (over 16). Anyone who meets the age criteria is able to enter, completely free of charge.



## IET Engineering and Technology Photographer of the Year 2018

Open to any photograph of an engineering-related subject that captures the dynamic, creative and progressive face of engineering and engineers today.





## Last year's winners

Launching the competition for the first time last year, the IET received more than 500 photos from children, young people and adults across the world, who submitted photos to the five categories: Digital, Environment and Energy, Structures and Transport, Robotics, and Design and Production.

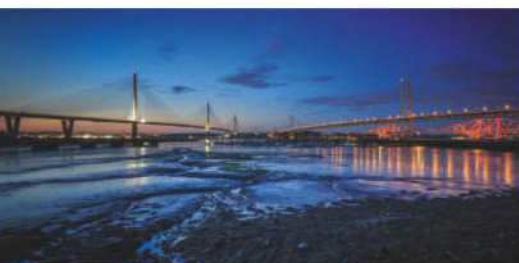
The overall winner was Naf Selmani from London, for his photograph 'The Hive' (see top) that captured the spectacular beehive-inspired sculpture at Kew Gardens, London, from below, as one of the young visitors plays on the top glass floor. This multi-sensory experience integrates art,



**The Red Arrows over Gwynt y Môr wind farm by Stephen Morris was placed in the 2017 competition**

science and landscape architecture. The other winners included Stephen Morris from Wales, who captured a once-in-a-lifetime shot of the Royal Air Force Aerobatic Team, the Red Arrows, turning over the Gwynt y Môr wind farm off the North Wales coast during a display at Rhyl airshow in 2016 (see above).

Highly commended by the judges, Martin Watt from Fife took this photo (see left) 10 days before the new Queensferry Crossing in Scotland opened. Martin has photographed the bridges several times and had previously made stitched panoramas, but this was the first time he had managed to get them all in one shot.



**Martin Watt's image of the Queensferry Crossing was highly commended in last year's competition**

## Categories and prizes

You can enter up to five photos across any of the following categories

### Design and Production

This category celebrates innovation around the design, development and making of all the things that people need. Images might include mechanical, materials and manufacturing.

### Digital

In this category, you can include photography around robotics and electronic tools, as well as systems, devices and resources that generate, store or process data.

### Environment and Energy

This category focuses on engineering and technology within our environment, as well as energy efficiency, energy services, facility management and alternative energy technologies.

### Structure

This category includes construction, architecture, buildings, bridges, and cityscapes.

### Transport

Photographs of all forms of transportation are included in this category.

### Best Smartphone Photo

A new category to the competition. The judges will be looking for the best photograph taken on a smartphone across all of the categories!

The judges will look at every entry and award £500 to each of the five adult category winners and £150 to each of the five youth category winners. An overall winner across all categories and age groups will then be awarded an extra £250. The winner of the Best Smartphone Photo will win £150. On top of the cash prizes, a selection of the winning images will be displayed in a photographic exhibition in central London and will feature in *Amateur Photographer* later this year.



Enter by 28 September 2018 at [www.theiet.org/photo-competition](http://www.theiet.org/photo-competition) #IETPhotoComp

# The pangolin man

## by Adrian Steirn

Photojournalist **Adrian Steirn** aims to bring a rare creature to the world's attention in order to help its survival, as **Keith Wilson** writes

**R**esembling a giant pine cone when curled up, the prehistoric-looking pangolin is like no other creature on earth. It is the only mammal covered in scales, has no teeth and cannot chew. Instead, it uses a tongue, the length of its body, to eat around 200,000 ants and termites per day. But there is one sinister and tragic fact about this curious creature that threatens its very existence – the pangolin is the world's most traded mammal and no amount of protected status appears to be saving it from the hands of poachers.

In 2016, the South Africa-based photojournalist Adrian Steirn travelled to Zimbabwe to shoot a video and stills to document the work of the Tikki Hywood Foundation, a privately run sanctuary dedicated to saving and rehabilitating pangolins that have been confiscated from poachers. Through its work, the foundation has become a

leading authority on pangolins and an active voice in trying to save these harmless creatures from extinction. In the Far East, pangolin meat is a delicacy and costs up to \$350 a kilogram, while their scales fetch even greater sums – approximately \$3,000 a kilogram for use in traditional Chinese medicine. For the foundation's founder and CEO, Lisa Hywood, having access to a compelling set of images and footage about the plight of the pangolin was vital to her campaign, and Adrian took up the challenge. 'Pangolins are the most trafficked mammal on our planet,' he says, 'yet most people have never heard of them, let alone seen a picture of one.'

### A visual narrative

Central to Adrian's coverage were the local men employed by the Tikki Hywood Foundation who care for the pangolins on a daily basis. Known as 'the pangolin men', they are each assigned one of



© ADRIAN STEIRN

the creatures to look after during their recovery and rehabilitation, before eventually releasing them back into the wild. When rescued from the hands of poachers, the animals are often injured, dehydrated and severely malnourished. 'We walk them, we feed them, we protect them – like our children,' one of the men says in the video accompanying Adrian's photos.

This caring and nurturing work in the dry, bright landscape of the bush provided Adrian with a visual narrative that was ideal for his still images. He remarks: 'I wanted to take portraits using a creative direction that would be impactful enough to

command attention and to influence people so they would take the time to know what pangolins are and to learn how dire their plight has become.'

There was never any shortage of daylight while Adrian carried out his assignment but the harsh shadows cast by the high bright African sun meant the portraits, such as the one here, required fill-in flash to lift detail in the shadows.

There was another benefit from adding flash, which was the catchlight created in the eye of the pangolin when the timid creature momentarily looked directly at the camera. Adrian used a wideangle Elmarit-S 30mm f/2.8 lens set to the widest aperture on his Leica S



### Adrian Steirn

Since moving to Cape Town over a decade ago, Australian-born Adrian has shot photo stories and films about the major environmental and social issues affecting the African continent. He founded the Ginkgo Agency and Beautiful News, a digital news platform that releases short films celebrating life in South Africa. He is photographer-in-residence for WWF South Africa. [www.adriansteirn.com](http://www.adriansteirn.com)



In this gentle image, Adrian managed a delicately balanced exposure and perfectly focused catchlight in the pangolin's eye. It features inside the book and was cropped for the cover Leica S (Typ 007), 30mm, 1/250sec at f/2.8, ISO 100

## 'These pangolin photographs represent a beautiful insight into a tragic reality'

camera, with a shutter speed of 1/250sec and ISO 100.

### Media attention

The resulting images and video footage proved significant in raising public awareness of the pangolin and the work of the Tikki Hywood Foundation. Just as importantly, it also provided the pangolin men themselves with a validation of their role in the fight to save these animals, a fact that Adrian acknowledges: 'To see the relationship between animal and carer in a single frame was very relevant to the

people out there to actually care,' he says. 'These pangolin photographs represent a beautiful insight into a tragic reality.'

Through the resulting international media attention from this photograph and others, plus the video's hundreds of thousands of views on YouTube, the plight of the pangolin and the work of the pangolin men are now much better known. Indeed, one half of this image, cropped to show the pangolin cradled in the hands of his carer, is the cover of a newly published book,

*Photographers Against Wildlife Crime*. The media attention has also coincided with stricter enforcement of penalties against poachers in Zimbabwe, where pangolins are listed on Zimbabwe's Specially Protected Species Schedule: apparently, since 2016 more

than 20 poachers have received the mandatory nine-year jail sentence for possessing a pangolin without the proper permits. Hopefully, Adrian Stein's photos may yet mark a significant turning point in saving the pangolin from extinction.

AP

### CROPPING FOR THE COVER



THE MAIN image here was radically cropped to form the cover of the recently published book, *Photographers Against Wildlife Crime*, featuring the work of Adrian Stein and 23 other photographers who have spent years documenting the illegal wildlife trade. *Photographers Against Wildlife Crime* by Britta Jaschinski and Keith Wilson (Introduction by Rosamund Kidman Cox, Afterword by Jim Brandenburg), hardback, 184 pages, £40, is available from [www.photographersagainstwildlifecrime.com](http://www.photographersagainstwildlifecrime.com)

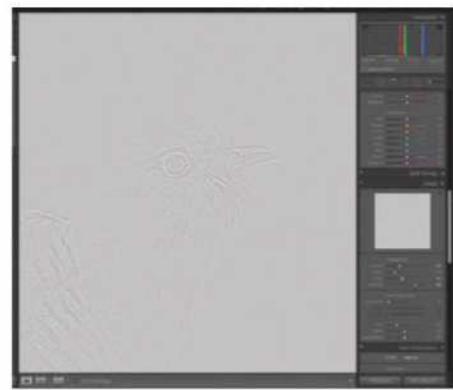


## Andrew Fusek Peters

Andrew Fusek Peters is an acclaimed wildlife photographer and has been shortlisted for British Wildlife Photographer of the Year and Wildlife Photographer of the Year. His books include *Wilderland*, *Upland*, and the National Trust Guidebook to the Long Mynd. [www.andrewfusekpeters.com](http://www.andrewfusekpeters.com)



## THE LIGHTROOM PROCESS – THE BASICS



### 1 Initial sharpening

In Lightroom's Develop Module, click 1:1 to zoom in. The area you want to focus on is the head, eye, beak and feathers. By default, Lightroom CC now has set the Amount slider to 40. Start by dragging to the right but beware of increased noise.

### 2 Setting the radius

Radius is a way of increasing sharpness at the important edges between the subject and its surroundings. It is measured in pixels with the default set to one pixel. I suggest that the default is a fairly reliable setting but it's worth experimenting to see how it works.

### 3 It's all in the detail

Detail is exactly that, working out what is an edge and applying the sharpening to it. A lower detail will limit sharpening to the clearest edges. Higher detail is much more extreme. Pressing Alt will give you a greyscale of your shot, to see where it applies. Less is more.

# Look sharp

A simple and effective workflow in Lightroom and Photoshop will ensure you get the best out of your raw wildlife shots, says **Andrew Fusek Peters**

**A**s a wildlife photographer, achieving a sharp shot is a worthy goal. Post-processing tools can do much to improve an original raw file. However, sharpening takes place long before a photo appears on your computer screen. You need to study your camera body, lenses and settings, and develop skills to get close to species without disturbing them. For the cuckoo shot (page 41) I had been to a good cuckoo site on a cloudy day but returned when the sun was out. Clear morning light goes a long way towards producing an initial sharp raw file. After an hour of patiently getting closer to the male cuckoo, it finally allowed me to stand right under the telegraph wire and photograph it with the sun behind. Long telephoto lenses often have very shallow depth of field wide open, sometimes measured in millimetres. So knowing where to place your focus is key.

I once climbed to the top of the Cairngorms to photograph ptarmigan. I came away with plenty of up-close shots but had set the focus points of my Canon EOS 7D on the rather round body of the bird. This was a fatal mistake. Always focus on the eye, the key element for most

wildlife photos, because a focus point on the body can mean the eye won't be sharp. In this case, not a single shot was usable.

With the aforementioned cuckoo, I had the right settings, and was able to get close to it because of the fantastic silent shutter of the Olympus OM-D E-M1 Mark II. I was able to continue shooting because of the very light weight of the 300mm f/4 lens. This was crucial as the warm day produced another seasonal enemy of sharpness – heat haze. As a result, only about 20 in 500 shots were sharp. On very hot days, you can literally see the heat rising from the land in waves and there is no camera in the world that can get a sharp photo in such conditions if you are shooting from some distance away.

The first step is to narrow down your shoot on import, checking at 1:1 if shots are sharp or have potential for sharpening. A raw file carries more information than a JPEG but can appear softer on first impressions because it is unprocessed. I would always recommend you shoot in raw, as the files are more elastic and you are not relying on your camera and its in-built sharpening. This isn't to say that modern JPEGs from the latest

Wren singing at Bridges, Shropshire  
Canon EOS 7D Mk II, 500mm + 1.4x III, 1/600sec at f/5.6, ISO 2000

ALL PICTURES © ANDREW FUSEK PETERS



## 4 Wear the mask

The most useful slider is Masking. Be careful not to sharpen subject and surroundings – in this case the blue sky. Pressing Alt as you work the slider shows where sharpening is applied. A setting between 80 and 95 means you can sharpen just the subject.



## 5 Noise reduction

The Colour slider is set to 25 by default. Raise if necessary. Keep Luminance low – under 15 or if shot at very low ISO, reduce to 0. Higher settings have the effect of blurring your subject slightly, though setting detail and contrast fairly low can sometimes rescue a high ISO shot.



## 6 Output or export

I rarely apply further output sharpening for print or web in the export dialog box. If a photo looks good at 1:1 at this stage, I am happy to go straight to print, export to social media, reducing size to 1000 pixels leading edge and 72dpi for screen resolution.



Sparrowhawk taking a collared dove in my back garden  
Canon EOS 5D Mark IV,  
100-400mm, 1/1250sec at  
f/5, ISO 2500

## The Lightroom quick fix

If you don't have time to work in Photoshop, Lightroom has a great set of quick fixes that can produce a pleasing image. This shot of a sparrowhawk catching a collared dove was taken through double-glazed glass. Even before sharpening, apply the new Adobe Landscape profile. Bring up Whites & Blacks to move the histogram more to the middle. Add Contrast, Clarity and a slight Tone Curve.

Remember that most sharpening works at defining contrast at the edges of your subject. Click on the adjustment brush, set Exposure to 0.13, Contrast 11, highlights 14, shadows 16, Clarity 19, Sharpness 17. Use a small brush and go over the head of the sparrowhawk and that of the collared dove and other areas that you want to emphasise. Use the erase brush to clean up. You can save your brush settings as a preset, with settings to suit, by going into New>Custom>Save current settings as new preset. To finish, crop in tightly to funnel the focus.



Paint over the head and other areas of your subject you want to emphasise



You can save your brush settings as a preset to use for future editing



Little owl in the dawn light, Shropshire  
Canon EOS 5D Mark IV,  
500mm, 1/125sec at f/8,  
ISO 250

generation of cameras aren't very usable. They are, but it is a risk if a shot needs a lot of work on it, such as sharpening, recovering shadow detail and taking down highlights.

Some photographers talk about getting it right in camera, and yes, you need the best shot you can work with. But modern software replicates a lot of historic darkroom practices. There is nothing wrong with making your photo look as clean and clear as possible. If I were to



Male Cuckoo on Clee Hill, Shropshire  
Olympus E-M1 Mark II,  
300mm + 1.4 extender,  
1/800sec at f/5.6, ISO 250

## Photoshop's hidden sharpening tools



### Unsharp Mask

Hit Cmd/Ctrl+J to duplicate the layer. Zoom in on the head. Go to Filter>Sharpen>Unsharp Mask. Toggle the preview to see the effect – here I have increased the amount to 83%. Leave Radius and Threshold at default settings.



### Unsharp Mask again

Too much of a good thing can be wonderful. Run the filter again. Check carefully that the image is not oversharpened and looking over-crisp. Use Opacity to lower the sharpening to create a pleasing image.



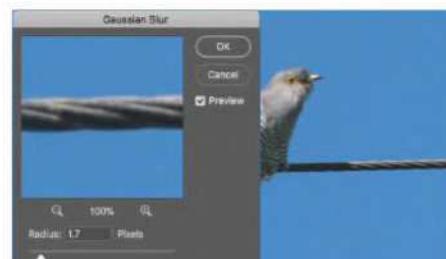
### Action stations

To save time, create and record a set of actions. Go to Window>Actions>Record, and then run your unsharp filter sequence all the way through. Press 'stop record' and save as a new action, naming it 'Unsharp Mask.'



### The wonders of layer masks

Unsharp Mask will sharpen the whole picture. With the Unsharp Mask Layer selected, add a layer mask. With the brush tool set to black, paint the whole picture. Use a white brush to paint the sharpening back in.



### Soften the surroundings

Soften the rest of the frame, so your subject will appear sharper. Create a new layer and go to Filter>Blur and use either Lens or Gaussian Blur. Add a Layer Mask and paint with a black brush over the cuckoo itself to keep it sharp.



### High Pass Sharpening

This is another useful filter. Duplicate your layer by hitting Cmd/Ctrl+J. Go to Filter>Other>High Pass. Set amount between 1-3 pixels. Go to Layer Blend mode in the Layers panel and choose overlay. You can tweak opacity to suit.

send unprocessed photos out to a press agency or a camera magazine, they simply wouldn't get published.

Sharpening, done sensitively and with care, can change a dull photo into one that will get noticed, be it on social media or in the world of publishing, galleries or awards. The aim, as always, is to develop quickly, but if a photo shows real promise spend more time, often in Photoshop, to fine-tune the sharpening for great results.



# 30 wildlife accessories

There's more to wildlife photography than owning a telephoto zoom. Here are 30 wildlife accessories that could make all the difference to your shooting in the great outdoors

## Wildlife Watching Supplies C14.3 Double Bean Bag

£25 • [www.wildlifewatchingsupplies.co.uk](http://www.wildlifewatchingsupplies.co.uk)

When you're shooting at ground level, or don't have space to use a tripod, a beanbag can be indispensable. These cushions are perfect for supporting cameras with spotting scopes or long lenses, and can even dampen any vibration caused by your camera. The C14.3 Standard Double Bean Bag is a fine example, with two main compartments that can be filled with beans, rice, corn, bird food, or for an ultra-light option, polyester. It's made using extra-strong thread and double stitching, and designed to support lenses up to 600mm.



## Tilley T3 Cotton Duck hat

£70 • [www.tilley.com](http://www.tilley.com)

If you spend a lot of time outdoors, you'll need a good hat to protect yourself from the elements. They don't get better than the Tilley T3 – a classic design that's been in production for over 30 years. Made in Canada, it comes with a lifetime warranty against faulty materials or just normal wear and tear, and comes in a choice of five colours. Be sure to heed Tilley's instructions on choosing the right size.



## Pluto Trigger

£110 • [www.plutotrigger.com](http://www.plutotrigger.com)

For some subjects, triggering the shutter manually just won't do. The Pluto Trigger is a remote trigger that can also be used with a smartphone. It connects to a smartphone via Bluetooth, and to a camera using cables that are available for most brands. It can also work as an infrared release with compatible cameras. Your phone can then be used much like a conventional remote release. More interestingly for wildlife work, the trigger unit has several built-in sensors, including for sound, light, and proximity. There's even a laser trigger, with a tiny laser unit included.



## PNY The Outdoor Charger

£24 • [www.pny.com/eu](http://www.pny.com/eu)

Powerbanks are hugely useful – they can keep your phone topped up and can also recharge an increasing number of cameras. PNY's Outdoor Charger is unusual in that it's designed to be used in more-challenging environments, with dust and water resistance to the IP65 specification. It packs plenty of juice for charging even high-power devices, and the icing on the cake is a built-in LED flashlight.

## Linpix Photography Mat

£19 • [www.speedgraphic.co.uk](http://www.speedgraphic.co.uk)

Perhaps not the most exciting accessory, but certainly practical. The Linpix Photography Mat (75x145cm) is made from 300-denier polyester with a damp-proof backing. Useful when you need to lie down on the ground to shoot inconspicuously or from low angles.



## Camouflage tape

£10

Many wildlife subjects are easily scared by the unfamiliar, and the only way to photograph them is to stay quiet and hidden. Camouflage tape is a great way of keeping your kit inconspicuous – it can be used to cover items such as tripod legs and lens hoods. Various patterns are available from companies like Mossy Oak and Stealth Gear, and cheap generic products can easily be bought online too.

## Lowepro S&F memory card wallet 20

£18 [www.lowepro.co.uk](http://www.lowepro.co.uk)

Don't overlook the importance of owning a good memory card wallet, as wildlife photography usually involves shooting a lot of images in short succession. This wallet is designed to hold up to 12 Compact Flash or SD cards safely. Clip it to your belt or stash it in your pocket and you won't waste time scrabbling around in your bag to find a spare memory card only to then miss a shot.



## Kenko Teleplus DG AF extension tube set

£137 [www.intro2020.co.uk](http://www.intro2020.co.uk)

Wildlife photography includes a whole world of insects. Extension tubes act as a cheap, lightweight alternative to carrying a macro lens: they fit between a lens and camera body to reduce the minimum focus distance, enabling close-up shooting with practically any optic. As they don't contain any glass they have little effect on sharpness, although with slow lenses on DSLRs the viewfinder can become distinctly dark. This Kenko set is available for Canon, Nikon and Sony Alpha mounts, and maintains electronic connections between the lens and camera enabling auto-exposure and autofocus.



## Walkstool Comfort 45 L

£75-£100 [www.walkstool.com](http://www.walkstool.com)

Shooting wildlife can involve a lot of patience and staying in one place, so some sort of portable chair can be handy. The Swedish-made Walkstool Comfort is not the cheapest option, but stands out due to its two-section telescopic legs that make it taller and more comfortable than most, while still being lightweight and portable. The mesh seat material means it won't pool water in wet conditions. It's available in four sizes of various heights, so make sure you get the right one.



## Matin M-7096 Rain cape

£17 [www.amazon.co.uk](http://www.amazon.co.uk)

If you don't want bad weather to interrupt your photography, you'll want a suitable camera cover that can be pulled out at a moment's notice to keep your kit dry. This simple but effective raincape fits most popular DSLRs and mirrorless cameras with up to a 300mm lens attached. A small aperture covered by a protective flap allows an uninterrupted view through the viewfinder and it packs down well, so it won't take up too much space in your bag. Not only useful for rain, this cover also provides good protection from dust and is a useful accessory to have when you're working on a sandy beach.



### Tamron 18-400mm f/3.5-6.3 Di II VC HLD

£649 • [www.intro2020.co.uk](http://www.intro2020.co.uk)

All-in-one superzooms aren't usually the first choice for wildlife, but can be handy in situations where you need to travel light. Tamron's groundbreaking 18-400mm is the longest lens of its type, giving an impressive 600mm equivalent range. It's also dust and splash resistant for outdoor shooting, which can be a boon when shooting wildlife. You won't get as sharp pictures compared to using a premium telephoto, but it'll certainly be better than not getting the shot at all.



### COOPH Photo Glove Ultimate

£175 • [www.cooph.com](http://www.cooph.com)

The Photo Glove Ultimate is a kind of hybrid between a mitt and a glove. When zipped up, it functions as a leather mitt – warm, but not great for pushing small buttons. However, unzip the mitts and push them back (magnets hold the thumb part and the fingers part of the mitt in place) and your fingers, encased in their lightweight inner 'gloves', are ready to operate a camera. They're well-made and durable, making them an excellent option for wildlife photographers working in cold climates.

### Páramo Halcon Jacket

£295 • [www.paramo-clothing.com](http://www.paramo-clothing.com)

Super-lightweight and able to cope with up to four hours of rain, this Páramo jacket is ideal for spring, summer and autumn use. It uses soft, breathable Nikwax Analogy waterproof fabric, which is rustle-free so shouldn't scare off wildlife when you move. There are decent-sized outside pockets for accessories, and two large internal mesh pockets. It comes in men's and women's fits, in a range of sizes.



### WD My Passport Wireless Pro 1TB

£140 • [www.wdc.com/en-gb](http://www.wdc.com/en-gb)

If you're out on an extended

shooting session with large

lenses, you will want to back

up your pictures, and the WD

MyPassport Wireless Pro is the

best option we've yet come across.

Storage options range from 1TB to 4TB

and it has a powerful built-in rechargeable

battery. Pop in your SD card, press the copy

button and it'll back up your images, and, better still,

perform an incremental backup next time you

insert the same card. You can view your shots on a

phone or tablet using the device's built-in Wi-Fi.

### Manfrotto MPMXPROC5 Monopod with MVMXPRO base

£190 • [www.manfrotto.co.uk](http://www.manfrotto.co.uk)

Monopods are ideal for supporting heavy telephoto lenses, while also leaving you mobile to track subjects. Manfrotto's latest XPRO monopods are lightweight yet strong, and use quick-to-operate lever leg locks. They come in aluminium or carbon fibre construction. The optional fluid base, while designed for video, can also give extra stability with large lenses.





### MindShift Gear UltraLight Dual 25L

● £140 ● [www.mindshiftgear.com](http://www.mindshiftgear.com)

If you're trekking some distance to a shooting location, it's useful to have a dual-purpose backpack that can hold not just your camera gear, but supplies and waterproofs too. Very lightweight, the MindShift Gear UltraLight Dual 25L is water-resistant thanks to external and internal coatings, and a waterproof cover is included. The separate camera module can hold a DSLR with a large zoom, while the main compartment has plenty of space for other possessions. Another section can house a 2.5L hydration reservoir.



### Panasonic Lumix G Vario 100-300mm f/4-5.6 II OIS

● £550 ● [www.panasonic.co.uk](http://www.panasonic.co.uk)

If there's one lens that epitomises the size advantages of Micro Four Thirds for telephoto work, it's this hugely popular 100-300mm zoom. Boasting optical image stabilisation and fast, silent focusing, the latest 'II' version adds weather-resistant construction and compatibility with Panasonic's Dual IS system. It gives a 600mm equivalent range in a very compact package, but if you need more reach, Panasonic's Leica-branded 100-400mm f/4-6.3 OIS goes all the way to 800mm equivalent, although at a significant premium.

### Wildlife Watching Supplies Long and Low Dome Hide C31.1

● £349 ● [www.wildlifewatchingsupplies.co.uk](http://www.wildlifewatchingsupplies.co.uk)

If you'd like to blend into your surroundings and have a portable waterproof enclosure to protect you and your gear, purchasing a hide is worth considering. Wildlife Watching Supplies produces a variety of hides and the C31.1 is particularly good for low-level photography with its low opening window. It measures 2.15m long, 1.25m wide and 1.1m high with pockets around the base. There are four different printed patterns to choose from so you can match it to the type of shooting environment you plan to use it most. A separate groundsheet and scrim cover are available.



### Sigma 100-400mm f/5-6.3 DG OS HSM C

● £699 ● [www.sigma-imaging-uk.com](http://www.sigma-imaging-uk.com)

Many users can't justify the cost of long zooms, and don't want to cart around the weight. But this Sigma telezoom is both far more affordable, and smaller than most other 100-400mm zooms. This comes at the cost of maximum aperture, but that's of little concern owing to the high-ISO performance of modern DSLRs. It's ideal for APS-C DSLR users in particular, but be aware that it isn't weathersealed.



### Angle finder

● £179-£230

High-end DSLRs, with their sophisticated phase-detection AF, have traditionally had an advantage with tracking fast-moving wildlife. This means using their optical viewfinders, which can be hard to reach if the camera is at a high or low angle. The solution is an angle finder that clips onto the viewfinder eyepiece. Canon users need the Angle Finder C (£179); Nikon users need the DR-6 Right Angle Viewing Attachment (£229).





### Sony Cyber-shot RX10 IV

● £1,799 ● [www.sony.co.uk](http://www.sony.co.uk)

While wildlife is traditionally shot with high-end DSLRs and large telephoto lenses, sometimes they're not practical to carry. This is where the RX10 IV comes in. It has a built-in 24–600mm equivalent zoom and can shoot at 24 frames per second with full autofocus tracking. It won't quite match a DSLR for tracking birds in flight, for example, but it comes remarkably close. It's by far the best bridge camera for wildlife photography made to date.

### Nikon D500

● £1,799 ● [www.nikon.co.uk](http://www.nikon.co.uk)

If you want to buy an exceptionally capable DSLR for shooting wildlife, but can't afford to break the bank on a high-speed full-frame model, then look no further than the brilliant Nikon D500. Its 153-point autofocus system is borrowed from the professional D5 and has an uncanny ability to track subjects around the frame, while 10 frames per second shooting and excellent high-ISO image quality mean you won't miss any of the action. Its rugged weatherproof construction and excellent handling will ensure it'll keep on going in tough conditions too.



### Sony Alpha 9

● £4,299 ● [www.sony.co.uk](http://www.sony.co.uk)

It's not so long ago we thought that mirrorless cameras would never compete with DSLRs for shooting high-speed subjects, but that all changed with the Sony Alpha 9. Offering 20fps shooting at its full 24MP resolution, with a vast 241-shot raw buffer and zero viewfinder blackout, it's the fastest full-frame camera on the market. It also has the most sophisticated autofocus, with 693 AF points capable of tracking subjects no matter when in the frame they move – a truly phenomenal camera.



### Sigma 150-600mm f/5-6.3 DG OS HSM S

● £1,330 ● [www.sigma-imaging-uk.com](http://www.sigma-imaging-uk.com)

We've tested both of Sigma's 150–600mm zooms and we especially like the Sport version – it's huge and expensive but seriously sharp, with impressively fast autofocus. The Contemporary version is smaller and easier to carry, and more affordable (£789), but doesn't give quite the same image quality. Tamron's 150–600mm optics are worthy options too.

### Nikon AF-S Nikkor 200-500mm f/5.6E ED VR AF-S

● £1,299 ● [www.nikon.co.uk](http://www.nikon.co.uk)

For Nikon DSLR shooters, the 200–500mm f/5.6 offers a unique option, being relatively affordable while offering a very useful long telephoto range – extending to fully 750mm equivalent on DX-format cameras such as the D500. It's also relatively portable given its range. However, it's not claimed to be weathersealed, and being an E-type lens with an electromagnetic diaphragm it'll only work on relatively recent Nikon bodies – check compatibility with your camera before buying.





### Canon EF 100-400mm f/4.5-5.6 L IS II USM

£1,949 • [www.canon.co.uk](http://www.canon.co.uk)

Most of the major camera manufacturers make high-end 400mm telephoto zooms, and it's not difficult to see why. They offer a decent telephoto range in a relatively portable package, usually with fast ultrasonic-type autofocus and optical image stabilisation. Canon's is a particularly fine example: a significant improvement on the firm's older 100-400mm, it's impressively sharp at all focal lengths. On APS-C models such as the EOS 7D Mark II it offers a 160-640mm equivalent zoom range.

### Gitzo GT3543LS Systematic tripod kit

£760 • [www.manfrotto.co.uk](http://www.manfrotto.co.uk)

To support long and heavy lenses most effectively, you need a sturdy tripod. The key thing is choosing one that's strong enough but also light enough to carry to your location. The GT3543LS is a 4-leg section tripod that comes with an impressive 25kg load capacity and has a 146cm maximum working height. It's designed for the longest telephoto zooms and heaviest cameras used by serious wildlife photographers. As part of the kit you get a Gitzo GH3382QD Series 3 Centre Ball Head, and GC4101 tripod bag.



### Canon 14x32 IS binoculars

£1,249 • [www.canon.co.uk](http://www.canon.co.uk)

A pair of binoculars is great to have for those times when you'd like to view smaller birds and distant wildlife. Super-steady handheld tracking and rock-steady views of nature and distance subjects are made possible thanks to the implementation of Canon's image stabiliser (IS) technology, which is powered by a pair of AA batteries. Large eyecups, simple controls at your fingertips, and a well-balanced design all make it possible to use these binoculars for prolonged periods without causing discomfort.



### Panasonic Lumix G9

£1,299 • [www.panasonic.co.uk](http://www.panasonic.co.uk)

The Lumix G9 is one of the fastest and most capable mirrorless cameras on the market right now. Only the professional Sony Alpha 9 (see left) can match its blazing 20 frames per second with continuous AF offering, and that comes with a hefty premium. Having the option to fire the shutter silently is invaluable for when you don't want to risk disturbing your subject and it backs up all of the above with a sprightly AF system and superb EVF, which is larger than you get on many full-frame DSLRs. It offers a sensational specification for the money.

### Sony FE 100-400mm f/4.5-5.6 GM OSS

£2,499 • [www.sony.co.uk](http://www.sony.co.uk)

Perfectly matched to the high-speed Sony Alpha 9, this fine optic combines fantastic image quality with super-fast focusing and extremely effective stabilisation. While it's full-frame compatible it can also be used on APS-C bodies such as the A6500, giving a 600mm equivalent reach. Sony mirrorless users on a tighter budget should consider the FE 70-300mm f/4-5.6 G OSS too: it's a step above the typical consumer telezoom.



This low-level handheld shot of a merlin feeding in the cowslips was taken with the VR mode set to normal, which is intended for static subjects

Nikon D850, 1/800sec at f/5.6, ISO 400



When he wasn't using the lens with a monopod, Mike looked around for additional support





# Taking flight

The AF-S Nikkor 180-400mm f/4E TC1.4 FL ED is Nikon's first zoom with a built-in teleconverter.

**Michael Topham**  
tries it for size

Flick a lever on the lens barrel, and the built-in teleconverter is dropped in. This shot of an eagle was captured at 560mm Nikon D850, 1/2000sec at f/5.6, ISO 200

**A**s I walk into the café at Hampshire's Hawk Conservancy Trust, the lens I'm carrying immediately draws attention. I'm attending a wildlife workshop, organised by TimeLine Events, and I have with me an AF-S Nikkor 180-400mm f/4E TC1.4 FL ED attached to a D850. It's Nikon's second most expensive lens currently on sale and the company's first telephoto zoom to feature a built-in teleconverter. The cost of the lens is a recurring question and, once I disclose its astronomical price, everyone else agrees there's no excuse not to get some great shots. I'm quick to admit, however, I'm out of my comfort zone shooting birds in

flight, so I'm thankful to organiser, Neil, who starts proceedings by explaining how to get the best out of the day. He suggests shooting handheld, but I can't bring myself to leave my monopod behind. After all, this is one of the heaviest lenses I've ever used.

## Warming up

To ease us into the action, our falconer starts by freeing a griffon vulture from its jesses. The gentle swoop and predictable flight path is just what I need to get familiar with the lens and my camera settings. To offset some of the 4.5kg combined weight, I screw my monopod into the tripod collar before flicking the lens's focus mode switch to A/M (AF priority).

## At a glance

£10,999

- Nikon F mount
- 27 elements in 19 groups
- f/4 maximum aperture (f/5.6 with 1.4x converter)
- 2m minimum focus distance
- 40.5mm filter size (via rear slip-in filter holder)
- 3,500g

This is similar to the lens's M/A mode, except it requires the focus ring to be rotated further before autofocus is overridden. My main reason for choosing A/M instead of M/A is that it can prevent accidental changes to focus caused by unintended operation of the focus ring. Next, I check the position of the focus-function-selector switch, which is used to assign the function performed by pressing any of the four focus-function buttons around the front of the barrel. By setting it to AF-ON, the function buttons mimic the role of the AF-ON button at the rear of the camera – essentially bringing the operation of back-button focusing to the front of the



The lens renders stunning background blur when it's used wide open  
Nikon D850, 1/500sec at f/4, ISO 400

## 'There's a strangely reassuring ping as the converter is dropped in and out'

lens where my left hand feels comfortable supporting it. Combining the above with continuous AF (AF-C) and continuous high (CH) burst shooting, and then depressing one of the lens's function buttons with my thumb, gives me my first taste of how quickly and silently the lens focuses on a moving subject.

With my next burst, I realise the D850's 25-point AF area is too small for my subject and switch to 72-point dynamic area AF. With a few successful shots under my belt and the lens showing great potential, it's time to give it a sterner test. It doesn't take long before our falconer ups the ante, substituting the predictable vulture with an erratic peregrine falcon. Immediately, I find myself in need of more reach, which presents the first opportunity to try out the lens's built-in 1.4x teleconverter. Unlike the 1.4x extender on Canon's EF 200-400mm f/4 L IS USM, the solid switch on this lens is located on the right of the barrel. What this means is that it's possible to drop the converter in using my right-hand middle finger without having to shift my left hand from the front of the lens or pull my eye away from the viewfinder. The action of the switch is incredibly smooth and there's a strangely reassuring ping as the converter is dropped in and out.

### Long shots

It doesn't take long to fully appreciate the luxury of extending the focal length to 252-560mm at the flick of a switch, and by activating the D850's DX-crop mode or pairing it with an APS-C DSLR such as the D500, it can be

turned into a whopper of a 378-840mm zoom. The only drawback of engaging the built-in converter is that it changes the constant maximum aperture from f/4 to f/5.6. In bright conditions, this one-stop deficit isn't a deal breaker and with the converter dropped in, I have little difficulty achieving a shutter speed of over 1/1250sec at ISO 400. Taking a closer look at the teleconverter switch, I realise it also has a lock, which is used to prevent the converter being employed accidentally or keep it constantly engaged.

### Memory recall

A merlin feeding in the cowslips presents the chance to use the lens handheld. So far, I've been using it with its vibration reduction (VR) switch set to 'sport', which is designed for subjects that move rapidly or unpredictably. With my focus now turned to a bird that's not moving, I opt to switch the VR mode over to 'normal', which is designed for stationary subjects. As in sport mode, the vibration reduction takes effect when the shutter-release or AF-ON button is depressed. In quiet surroundings, I hear the VR activate and raising the viewfinder to my eye instantly reveals how effective its four-stop advantage is at counteracting camera shake, both with and without the teleconverter.

Soon, I start to regret not packing my beanbag, which is what I need right now to rest the barrel a few centimetres off the ground. Supporting the lens in my left hand while lying flat on the floor quickly becomes tiresome, and whereas other photographers around me are happily shooting

One of the first shots of the day. Note how sharp the lens is in the centre at its maximum aperture  
Nikon D850, 1/200sec at f/4, ISO 400



The tripod collar can be loosened to rotate the camera into the portrait orientation quickly and easily  
Nikon D850, 1/800sec at f/5.6, ISO 400



with their lighter telephoto zooms, I have no choice but to take short breaks between shots. As my fatigued arms are telling me, it's a lens you only want to use handheld for short bursts. With no time to think about reattaching my monopod, I haul the D850 back up to my eye and support the carbon-fibre lens hood in the palm of my left hand to capture a few tracking shots of hawks in flight. With my feet well spread, I have a rock-steady base ready to try out the lens's memory-recall function.

I decide to turn off the beep on/off switch, so as not to risk disturbing the birds or those beside me. Next, I use the AF-ON button on the camera to obtain focus on an area of water where food is being thrown for the hawks to swoop and catch. Holding the memory-set button for a second stores the focus distance and just before grabbing a few quick shots of the hawks circling above, I remember to set the focus function switch to its memory recall setting, ready to reacquire the same focus distance as used in my previous shots in an instant with

a press of a focus function button. This useful feature is often found on professional lenses and comes into its own in the type of scenario where you'd like to get set up for one shot, but don't want to miss out on other shooting possibilities.

#### Image quality

More than 2,000 images later, I call it a day and, later that evening, import my shots into Lightroom. For £11,000, I expected the lens to deliver a special optical performance, but I quickly discover its outrageous sharpness, united with the D850's outstanding resolution, exceeds my expectations and then some. Sports and wildlife photographers will immediately fall in love with the quality of out-of-focus areas and the bokeh it creates throughout its zoom range. It's sharpest at the wide end of the zoom between 180mm and 300mm, but even at full telephoto and with the converter engaged, image quality is extremely impressive.

The optimum sweet spot is found around f/5.6-f/8, but being a wildlife and sports lens where

speed is essential, it's likely to be used most frequently at f/4. Colour fringing is virtually non-existent with and without the teleconverter engaged and although vignetting is apparent in images taken at f/4, it quickly disappears by f/5.6. At the time of testing, a profile wasn't available in Lightroom CC. However, Adobe should release one as part of its update programme soon, which would mean that vignetting correction at f/4 becomes a one-click fix.

#### Final thoughts

Just as avid car enthusiasts like to read about the newest Aston Martin or Ferrari, photographers love to know about the best kit money can buy. If money was no object and you're a Nikon user who requires the very best zoom lens to get up close to distant subjects, you'd put your name down for this lens in an instant. As I discovered, there's the issue of handling such a heavy beast over a prolonged period, but this aside, it's a dream lens that's capable of delivering mesmerising results in the type of sporting and wildlife

environments it was made for. In the real world, I see it being bought by press photographers or the type of working pro who demands a faster maximum aperture than Nikon's more affordable AF-S 200-500mm f/5.6E ED VR (£1,299) and the convenience of the wonderfully executed drop-in 1.4x teleconverter – something Nikon's older AF-S 200-400mm f/4 G VR II ED (£6,749) doesn't have. Pros will need it to make money quickly to offset the huge initial outlay, but it certainly has the potential to do just that, what with its image quality superior to anything you'd take on a cheaper lens covering a similar focal length.

Having hired other Nikon pro-spec lenses in the past, I'd estimate it to cost around £100 to hire for a day or £400 for a week. However, you'll find few hire companies stock it at present. There's also the small matter of putting down a deposit (usually several thousand pounds) to cover against damages, which would be refunded upon its safe return. To summarise, Nikon has created an absolutely sensational lens, and it's just a shame that its high price will have the final say over the number of photographers who get to use it.

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## Wildlife photo days

PHOTOGRAPHING birds is an incredibly challenging undertaking and requires great patience. Their fast, erratic behaviours are entirely unpredictable, making it all the more rewarding when you do eventually capture a great shot. TimeLine Events holds various birds of prey photo days throughout the year at the Hawk Conservancy Trust in Andover for anyone who'd like to challenge their photographic ability and have the opportunity to photograph a wide selection of birds, both in flight and within natural surroundings. An average day will see you take around 1,000+ images from 9.30 in the morning to 5 in the afternoon, with a short break for lunch included. The next event is on 14 September 2018 and tickets (£80) are available from [www.timelineevents.org](http://www.timelineevents.org).



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Taken by MPB's Ian Howorth

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# Tech Support

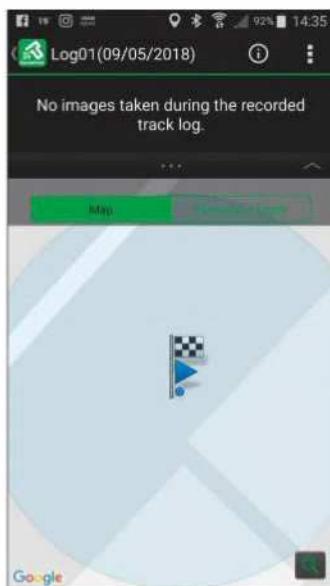
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## Unable to geotag photos since Olympus app update

**Q** I am new to the Olympus fold after getting a PEN-F at the end of last year and I was just about used to the quirks of the Olympus Image Share app on my Samsung Galaxy S8. But then the app updated and it has split into three different apps. I can just about work out what is what apart from the GPS tagging functionality, which is now the preserve of the new Olympus Image Track app. I am getting spurious errors that suggest my camera isn't compatible with the app and it can't find any images to tag, even though as far as I can see I have recorded a GPS log in the correct manner while taking photos. I'm at my wit's end! Can you help?

**Kyle Leighton**

**A** You aren't the only one complaining about the obstructive attitude of the OI.Track app. If you are following the apparent instruction to upload A-GPS data to the



The Olympus Image Track app is proving problematic for Kyle

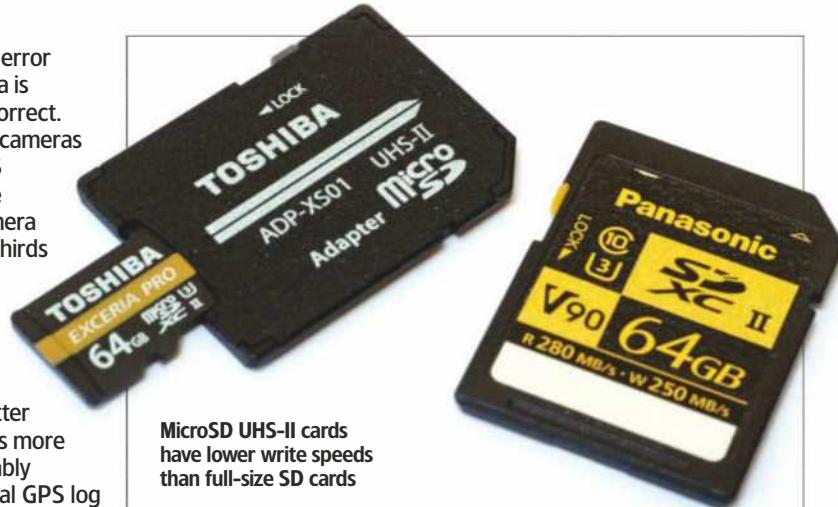
camera and getting an error suggesting your camera is incompatible – that's correct. A-GPS data is only for cameras with an integrated GPS receiver, like one of the Olympus TG tough camera range. No Micro Four Thirds Olympus models have integrated GPS; they depend on GPS logs compiled by your phone. But it would have been so much better if the app explained this more clearly. You have probably created a fully functional GPS log but when you came to applying that log to the images in your camera, you got an error suggesting no images were found. Again, thanks to a UI fail, you need to long-press the GPS log entry in order to get to the Add Geotag prompt. Just tapping on the log entry won't work. On iOS devices you need to slide the log entry.

## How do I soften shadows when using flash outdoors?

**Q** I'm using my Nikon D7200 with a Metz 48 AF-1 flash for some outdoor dusk and night-time portraits but no matter what I do I am getting some unpleasant sharply defined shadows on the subject's face. I have used the pull-out reflector/diffuser and a clip-on Sto-Fen diffuser but with hardly any beneficial effect. Can you tell me what I am doing wrong?

**Ed Holles**

**A** The basic rule for softening shadows is to increase the area of the light source as much as possible. It's a myth that using a small reflector or a small diffuser dome will, on its own, soften shadows magically. If you're inside and there are white walls and ceilings around you, reflectors and



MicroSD UHS-II cards have lower write speeds than full-size SD cards

## Can I use microSD UHS-II cards in my X-T2?

**Q** Seeing as my Fujifilm X-T2 can use UHS-II cards I looked at various buying options but I was quite surprised by how much more expensive they are compared to UHS-I cards. I can see that some microSD UHS-II cards offer a significant saving. There are some good deals on some Lexar 1000x microSD cards, as well as Toshiba Exceria Pro M501. Are there any pitfalls in using UHS-II microSD cards? Obviously some kind of adapter would be required.

**Jared Misra**

**A** You could look at it in two ways. Some laptops and various other tablets and similar devices, for example, no longer offer full-size SD card slots, so using microSD is a plus. The use of an adapter adds an element of potential unreliability, but with care this can be avoided. I don't think the Lexar Pro 1000x microSD cards come with an SD card adapter; you get a UHS-II speed microSD-USB reader instead. Last year its parent company, Micron, announced that Lexar was closing down, though its cards seem to remain in plentiful supply. In general, the fastest full-size SD cards reach higher write speeds than the fastest UHS-II microSD cards. Toshiba M501 microSD cards, which come with a UHS-II SD card adapter, offer 150MB/sec write speeds and 270MB/sec read speeds. Toshiba's full-size N101 cards swallow data at a rate of up to 240MB/sec.

especially diffuser domes, can spread the light by reflecting it off the large surface areas of the room's walls and ceiling. If you're outside, this light doesn't get reflected back to the subject. Only the light emitted directly from the flash, effectively a point source of light, regardless of whether a small reflector or diffuser is fitted, reaches the

subject and this will cast a sharp shadow. To soften your light outdoors you need, at the very least, to fit a clip-on mini softbox, such as a Lastolite Ezybox Speed-Lite 2, for example. Much better, though, is to use two or more light sources with softboxes.

**Q&A compiled by Ian Burley**

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The Canon 7 with its Dream Lens



## BLAST FROM THE PAST

# Canon 7

John Wade examines a camera with a dream of a lens

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Here we have one of the last great 35mm rangefinder cameras from Canon, defined more than anything else by its standard lens. The focal length is the usual 50mm, but the maximum aperture is an incredible f/0.95. It became known as the 'Dream Lens' and advertisements of the 1960s claimed it was four times more sensitive than the human eye.

The lens is made up of seven elements in five groups. The filter thread is a whopping 72mm, against most rangefinder camera standard lenses with threads more like 40-50mm. The camera body has an L39 mount, to take Leica screw-fit lenses, but this is surrounded by a second, larger bayonet mount to support the Dream Lens.

This was the first camera from Canon with a built-in selenium meter coupled to the shutter control, with readings displayed in a window in the top plate. For added accuracy in focusing, the rangefinder base is half as long again as on previous Canon cameras. Because of its size, a small square aperture is cut out of the meter cell to accommodate the second rangefinder window.



View from the top with the accessory coupler fitted

The focal plane shutter is made from stainless steel sheeting, 0.018mm thick and covered with a specially processed black plastic coating to make it resistant to heat, cold and moisture. It offers speeds of 1-1/1,000sec plus 'B' and 'T' settings. The addition of a special accessory coupler compensates for the lack of an accessory shoe and also provides a flash sync socket.

The Canon 7 is a beautiful and

impressive camera, but it's tempting to wonder if the true potential of the Dream Lens was ever fully realised, or whether Canon produced it for no better reason than to show it could.

**What's good** Rugged build, super-wide maximum aperture, accepts Leica screw lenses.

**What's bad** Lens prone to flare below f/5.6, lack of accessory shoe.

The unusual bayonet mount on the lens and camera body



## Contact

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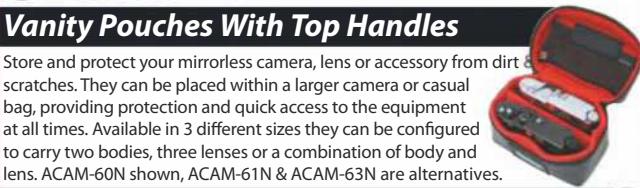
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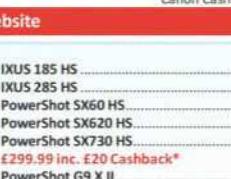


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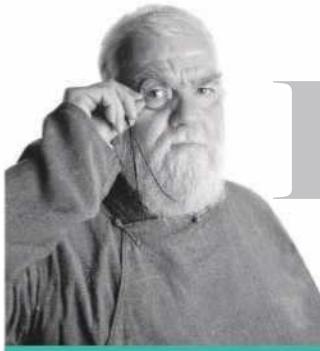
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# Final Analysis

**Roger Hicks considers...** 'Convent of Santa Sabba', 1857, by James Robertson and Felice Beato



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**'You can find modern colour pictures taken from pretty much the same angle'**

**O**ne of the strangest things about photographs is that we often have to rely on factors other than content to guess when they were taken. Here, for example, the giveaways are the sepia toning, the mottling, the general wear and tear: we can guess that it's quite old. All right, there's a date at the top of this page, so you know. But I can think of ruined castles in Spain that look pretty similar today; and I recall scenes in Malta in the 1950s which were not so different.

This prompts me to dart back a little further in time, to the first two or three decades of the 20th century. To judge from books and magazines, a favourite photographic theme was unsurfaced roads, churned to mud by cart wheels. When I first took up photography in the 1960s, and read all the magazines I could find, ancient and modern, I imagined that

such things could still be found. Maybe they could; but they must have been vanishingly rare by then, at least in the UK. Asphalted roads are much more modern than most people realise.

What is truly remarkable is that if you Google *Mar Saba* (it goes under various names and spellings and is in the Kidron Valley) you can find modern colour pictures taken from pretty much the same angle. There's a better pathway on the left, and there are a couple of aerials on the tower in the middle, but it's still there, and still a monastery. Somehow, though, the modern pictures are not as magical.

#### Seeing into the shadows

One reason for this is perhaps because they are too literal. Of course, removing the dimension of colour is a major degree of abstraction. Also, Robertson and Beato would have used 'ordinary' plates sensitive

only to blue: sensitising dyes would not come into common use until well into the 20th century. In another way, though, the self-masking nature of printing out paper is more in tune with the way we actually see: instead of the inky shadows that are characteristic of modern photography, we see into the shadows here as we do with our own eyes.

Another clue is that the modern world is greatly tidied up. I've already mentioned the new path, the surfaced roads and the way things looked when I was a boy in Malta. It's no longer a question of moving individual stones by hand, or loading and unloading donkeys: we have JCBs, tractors and bulldozers. Increasingly I suspect that 'magic' in a photograph is often a matter of distance and inaccessibility in both time and space; and that this may be as true of a 1950s *Playboy* centrefold as of a 7th-century monastery.

**Roger Hicks** has been writing about photography since 1981 and has published more than three dozen books on the subject, many in partnership with his wife Frances Schultz (visit his new website at [www.rogerandfrances.eu](http://www.rogerandfrances.eu)). Every week in this column Roger deconstructs a classic or contemporary photograph. **Next week he considers an image by Chris Connerton**

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